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CHURCH AND CHAPEL.

VOL. II.



CHURCH AND CHAPEL.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

“HIGH CHURCH,” “NO CHURCH,”

AND

“OWEN—A WAIF.”

“Those who do not live by His life, do not belong to Him, by whatever name they may call themselves, and whatever confession of faith they may sign. Belonging to a Church or sect is nothing.”—*Dying words of Bunsen.*

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON :

HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,
SUCCESSORS TO HENRY COLBURN,

13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1863.

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250. 0. 47.



LONDON :
PRINTED BY MACDONALD AND TUGWELL, BLENHEIM HOUSE,
BLENHEIM STREET, OXFORD STREET.

CONTENTS

OF

THE SECOND VOLUME.

BOOK II.—CONTINUED.

CHAPTER	SUNKEN ROCKS.	PAGE
VIII. ROBERT		3
IX. A FEW LAST WORDS		15

BOOK III.

THE DOWN-HILL ROAD.

I. A CLERICAL SKIRMISH	25
II. SELF-INQUIRY	36
III. MORE LOVE-MAKING	51
IV. ROBERT'S RETURN	73
V. ENEMIES	94
VI. CISSY DALY	109
VII. CHANGE	126
VIII. INTO TEMPTATION	154
IX. SUSAN AND AMY	163
X. ROBERT'S CHOICE	190

BOOK IV.

CHURCH AND CHAPEL.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. ALLAND'S SHADOW	213
II. DISSENTER AND CHURCHMAN	229
III. AN ODD COURTSHIP	242
IV. SECRET—AND NO SECRET	259
V. STILL TREATS OF LOVE MATTERS	278
VI. WITH THE STREAM	293
VII. CHURCH AND CHAPEL SHAKE HANDS	306

B O O K I I .

CONTINUED.

S U N K E N R O C K S .

VOL. II.

B



CHURCH AND CHAPEL.

CHAPTER VIII.

ROBERT.

MEANWHILE Robert Bayford was strolling over the Chipnam Downs. A favourite promenade of his ; away from the world—where he could think of Amy without much interruption, and be buffeted by the bracing winds that seemed to meet from all points and hold revelry on that high table-land. A long day hence it would be still more a favourite spot with him ; when the grim facts were known, and he preferred his own company to his brother's, or any friend's in Chipnam ; but

he would not take with him up there so many fair thoughts, and he would meet the devil there, playing his old part, and trying hard to get at him.

Bayford seldom breakfasted with his brother and sister. He was partial to a long walk before breakfast, and occasionally was not home till nine or ten o'clock, much to the discomfiture of his methodical sister, who liked things cleared away in good time. Hence this particular day of Mr. Chark's revelation, Robert was absent on the Downs, and the breakfast still waited for him in the dissenter's cottage.

Robert wanted "a good think" that morning, and it was only to be obtained on the Downs. Yesterday had been a troubled day with him, and with a clear head-piece in the early morning he could resolve matters into their due proportion.

The result of his cogitations was satisfactory to himself—the events of yesterday dovetailed into the map of the future admirably. Everything had been explained, atoned for—every day he could see—he was sure of it—

that she was learning to love him better, or rather becoming more of her old self, before too much theology had chilled her. He was sure there was a difference in her for the better; he went down the hill again convinced of it. He had not relished her apathy, or her reserve; now she was timid and impulsive again, the red lip would quiver when he was stern with her—and there was the old love peeping under the mask.

He marched down the hill, with his head thrown back and his chest squared. Of a truth he was a man to win a woman's love, and keep it,—a handsome man, in whose face was a frankness and openness that attracted even strangers towards him. In London, where he had been forced to remain a day or two before coming on to Chipnam, he had made quite a sensation in the streets; his bronzed healthful face—morally as well as physically healthful, with no sadness or eagerness in his looks common to the crowd of money-seekers who swept by him—had attracted most pedestrians, to glance for an instant towards him; even the beggars knew their

customer on the instant, and would not go away till something had been given them.

Humming lightly to himself, Robert Bayford came up the garden path to his brother's house, and his cheery summons at the door startled the three waiting for him in the library. By that time the plan of action had been arranged; Mr. Chark had been compelled to resign the post of story-teller to James Bayford. Susan, who had wished to make the attempt, had been overruled, and then had voted for her brother, and the brother had pleaded so earnestly to Mr. Chark. "I who understand him better, surely can reason with him better," James Bayford had said, "and urge him to keep strong. We were children together, and we have great faith in each other."

"I think he — he is right, Miss Bayford."

With pale face and lips compressed, Miss Bayford had been sitting in her brother's study—troubled perhaps, but firm and almost defiant. She nodded her head, but did not trust herself to speak; she was looking over

his shoulder at the opposite wall, studying it all. And then the knock came.

"God bless my soul, there he is!" exclaimed Mr. Chark. His nervous trepidation assured him then that he should have found a difficulty in explaining the facts to Robert,—better this firm, grave man, who understood his brother so well, than a feeble old fellow whose excitement robbed him of his utterance.

"I should like to stay a little while," Mr. Chark said, "if you will allow me. Perhaps Mr. Bayford may wish to see me—to ask a few questions *afterwards*."

"No, no—I will go to him in the parlour. Will you both wait here a little while?"

James Bayford left the room with a rapid step, leaving his sister and Mr. Chark facing each other, and yet forgetful of each other's presence.

"They are taking it all too seriously—they are looking upon it as too great a misfortune," he murmured.

"If it had not gone so far—if it had not lasted so long," whispered Susan Bayford to

herself, but it sounded like an answer to the clergyman.

Robert had entered the parlour, and was at the breakfast-table when his brother entered.

"Well, Jemmy," he said, "I hope you have brought me Susan's forgiveness. I have been wandering over the Downs, quite oblivious to the fact that any one expected me home here. What a fine bracing air there is up on the hills! You should go there more often, old chap—it would bring a colour to your cheeks."

"I cross the Downs often enough, Bob."

Robert Bayford started a little and lost a little of the colour from his own cheeks. That friendly, familiar boy-title was so seldom used now, and was used at that time so strangely.

"Now, Jemmy—what is it?"

"I have brought you bad news," was the sorrowful reply.

"Well, we can bear it. There is only one piece of news that would floor a man much."

"And that news?"

"Stop a bit," said Robert, turning more pale;

"is there anything very bad coming that requires a man to prepare himself?"

"What is very bad, or very good, is not distinguishable at a glance, Bob. The greatest sorrow to us in the present, may in the future be the greatest escape for us—the greatest blessing that could have happened! I believe this is, though I would have you be prepared for a keen disappointment. Think, dear brother, that it is God's will that one fair hope should be taken from you—that no one regrets it, for your own sake, more than I—knowing what a great good heart yours is, and how it was set upon this."

"Upon *this*!" echoed Robert absently.

He had pushed his chair back from the table, and was sitting with his hands clasped, and his thoughtful face turned from his brother. He knew it all then, but he could not realize it yet. How it had all come about, and what would be the end of it?

"You know, Bob, that I am speaking of Amy Saville."

"I guessed as much. Well, what of her?"

he asked more sharply; "what have you heard? That she is tired of me?"

"That her love was a fallacy, and unworthy of yours. She is in trouble too, Mr. Chark tells me—it has all been discovered by an accident. She would have married you in the hope of making you happy, and to have saved herself this humiliation in the eyes of her father's friend. But she was becoming more unhappy every day, and at last the secret escaped her. Surely all this is for the best, Bob—surely," with his hand suddenly seizing his brother's, and wringing it in his strong grasp, "you will think it for the best?"

Robert returned the pressure of his brother's hand.

"We shall try," he said; "it has been a long engagement, you see, and I have trained every thought for years to the hope. When I remembered, now and then—not so often as I might have done—that prayer our old mother taught us, about leading us not into temptation, I believed God set Amy between me and the devil, and strengthened me, for her sake. Oh! Jemmy, when they are talking too

much in the town about her and me—don't tell them this. They had better think me utterly unworthy of her—a man who never knew his own mind, who was best apart from her, and was cut adrift, because she saw his unworthiness, and what a life was in store for her if she mar —— if she married him."

"Why this?"

"It will sound more naturally—it's a little odd, just at present. For I think I was worthy of her—and she might have treated me a little—just a little—better!"

"Don't think of this bitterly, Robert. Do remember Him who sends these trials for our good. Life has gone smoothly with you until now—at the first check do not think it all a mockery."

"I am not a parson."

"Only the brother of a parson, who would give ten years of his life to know what is best to say to you now."

"Say nothing," and Robert Bayford sprang to his feet—"it is so much the best."

"Ah! but I must say that you and I should take comfort together, and have the power to

sustain each other when a shock such as this falls on one of us. You forget the old mother, Robert, who taught us to love and trust in each other—that mother you spoke of when you came back to Chipnam.”

“God forget me when I do!” he cried; “but, Jemmy, I mustn’t be preached at yet awhile. Give me time—let me get on to the Downs—let me get out of this house.”

“Don’t look so reckless?”

“If you don’t see me for a day or two—say even a week or two—don’t think that I have drowned myself. That’s out of my line, you know. But I can’t stop here.”

“Don’t hurry away in this mad mood, for God’s sake!” cried the brother alarmed

“I shall come back again, sober as a judge,” he said scornfully.

“Do you mean it?”

“Oh! yes. Go on with everything as usual. Tell them to hurry on with the villa. I shall want it completed by Michaelmas. Good-bye.”

“Will you not see Mr. Chark?”

“Ha!—where is he?”

"In the library—he is anxious to see you."

"I can't see him."

"And Susan; you must not run away from her like this, Bob."

"I can't see anybody—good-bye, old fellow. Best of old fellows!"

He was in the passage, where he encountered Susan, despite his wish to escape. She flung herself into his arms, as affectionately, as lovingly, as girls brought up with less command over their emotions would have done, under similar circumstances.

"Oh! Robert, I feared this months ago."

"No matter, no matter. What is it, after all? Only a mistake or two, caused by a poor girl not knowing her own mind. See to her, Jemmy; I can't stand any more of this!"

He passed her into his brother's arms, just in time to escape Mr. Chark, who appeared at the library door, and broke away.

Those who watched his impetuous progress from the door saw that he turned in the direction of the house that was perched on one of the Chipnam hills.

"I must go after him at once!" cried Mr.

Chark ; "he will see Amy, and I had wished to spare her."

"Has she spared us?" said Susan Bayford, turning quickly upon him with that grave white face of hers.

CHAPTER IX.

A FEW LAST WORDS.

MR. CHARK actually ran along the road after Robert Bayford. But the latter had strode off at a mighty pace, and no efforts of Mr. Chark could overtake him. Once he called "Bayford" at the top of his voice ; but his voice when strained was a weak and unearthly falsetto, and the wind carried even *that* the other way.

He could see Robert hurrying along and increasing the distance between them ; what would he say to Amy?—what would Amy reply? He might have foreseen that this would have happened, had he possessed but

common perspicacity ; he should have warned Amy of his coming, and bidden her be prepared to receive—or to fly—him. He had a vague hope, too, that Robert would pause at the hill-foot, just as he himself was accustomed to pause, to collect all his strength and his breath for the ascent ; but on Robert went. From the distant high road he could see the figure striding up towards the villa. Yes, Robert, with a load at his heart and a noise in his head like a sea breaking on a shingly coast, went up the hill. He kept his gaze downwards, and took but little heed of passing events, or he would have become aware of Mr. Alland descending. Once had they met before on that hill ; on the neutral ground between him and his love he met that man again.

“ Good morning, Mr. Bayford.”

Robert looked up, and the fierceness and despair on his face startled the rector of Chipnam. No one had ever met Robert Bayford with that look before.

“ I have been searching for Mr. Chark. Is he in the village ?” asked Alland.

"I believe so."

"Miss Saville is looking ill. Has anything happened?"

As pastor over a very large flock, Frederick Alland had imbibed a habit of asking many questions; the trials and troubles of his followers he was always anxious to share, and to do his best to alleviate.

"Yes, sir, a great deal has happened—has not Miss Saville told you?"

"No."

"I thought you were Miss Saville's father-confessor in such matters."

"Sir!"

Alland forgot his pastoral character, and looked the gentleman whose dignity had been outraged.

"Will you please to explain, sir?"

"Some day I may require an explanation of you, Mr. Alland. I have neither the time now, nor the inclination. If you cannot guess what has happened to-day, and what your share in the occurrence has been, I am very much mistaken in you, and will beg your pardon."



"Bayford, you will explain now. You are not ~~one~~ to talk in riddles."

"You are anxious to know all—you are quite in the dark?"

"I am."

"I have been deceived in Miss Saville—I thought that she was a girl who loved me, and placed implicit trust in me. I have been deceived in Mr. Alland—I thought that he was a man of principle, who might have been trusted with her."

"Bayford!" he gasped.

But Bayford had flung past him, and was striding on towards the villa again. The rector stood where he had listened to the fierce, biting words of one whom he had learned to esteem; he was too stunned to adopt any course of action. Bayford had implied so much, and had charged at him so ruthlessly.

Here was the incumbent of St. Edward's coming at a snail's pace up the hill; he would go down and meet him, and hear the whole story, before he resolved upon any particular plan.

Bayford was at the villa then. The win-

dows were open, and the lace curtains swaying with the breeze, just as they had been when he first went up that hill to meet his lady-love. With what different thoughts to then!—and what a little while ago!

He was impetuous and eschewed formality. He might not have been in his senses that day—thinking of it long afterwards, he always considered himself to have been half mad. He walked to the window and looked in. Amy was there; he passed through and stood at her side so suddenly, that she screamed as she turned round.

The sight of her pale face almost stilled the fire at his heart. He had not gone thither to upbraid her, or to pour upon her a torrent of reproaches, merely to say that he gave her up—to utter a good-bye, and go away, never perhaps to see her more. But still there had been anger within him, and a fever that there was no stilling—rather gathering force—till he met the white face of her on whom he had lavished so much affection.

“Don’t look so frightened, my girl—I haven’t come to eat you up,” he said.

It was grim jesting, with that hard-lined face before her.

Amy murmured "Robert," in a faint voice.

"I have nothing to scold you for, Amy. Say it was all my fault, if it will make you feel the happier. What right had I to take the fancy of a child for the love of a woman, and let the child go her own way in the world?"

Amy steadied herself by leaning one hand against the table. Her lip quivered; her eyes filled with tears; a great ball of something rose in her throat, and hindered her saying a word.

"I have been to blame—not you, Amy. I take all the blame; for I, a man of the world, should have known better than this! Take back your girl's promise to be my wife, and be happy and free, child. God bless you with a better husband than I should have made you!"

She should die if he did not leave her. Her heart was swelling so; the whole room was whirling round with her.

"I take all the blame," he repeated once more—"don't forget that. I—but oh! Amy,

why didn't you write to me in India, or tell me on the first day that I came back, that you could never love me well enough to be my wife!"

It was his one reproach, but it rung out sorrowfully, wildly, and told of the utter despair that had come upon him.

"I did not know," she gasped, after a hard struggle.

"You love another, too. My poor girl, what a struggle it must have been to have fought on with such a lie at your heart; what a mocking ghost I must have been to you, stealing here night after night to scare you!"

"Do leave me, Robert; come back to-night when I am more prepared," she cried; "oh, say you can forgive me for all this! say that, and let me go now."

"It is scarcely deserving the name of forgiveness, Amy," he said; "if it were a greater injury than I could stand against, for my dear dead friend's sake, I would not bear an angry feeling in my heart towards his daughter. God bless you—and good-bye!"

She burst into tears, and turned her head

away from him. He caught her in his arms, held her to his heaving chest a moment, and kissed her passionately.

“For the last time, Amy—pardon me—good-bye!”

He saw her drop on the couch, and hide her face away from him. One wistful look, and then he passed through the window; never again the same Robert Bayford whom we have known and loved!

Still further up the steep hill he turned, instead of making for the hill's foot, where the two clergymen awaited him, to weary him with kind words, at which he would have scoffed; and on, on his way, knowing not and caring not whither.

END OF BOOK THE SECOND.

BOOK III.

THE DOWN-HILL ROAD.



CHAPTER I.

A CLERICAL SKIRMISH.

THE Reverend James Bayford received a letter from his brother early in the following week. A very easy matter-of-fact letter, that made no mention of his disappointment, and was a trifle too easy and a trifle too matter-of-fact to be natural.

James and Susan laid their heads together over that letter, and tried to find a meaning in every word, and to glean therefrom some hope that all was well with brother Robert, and all the clouds were clearing fast away from him.

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She burst into tears, and turned her head

and then he held her in his arms, and they were happy for a moment, and then he was away.

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/

"He was never one to grieve very long, James," said she.

"Or to forget very easily, Susan."

"And there's his naturally light heart."

"And his naturally deep feelings. We must wait, Susan, until we see him, before we judge how such a disappointment has affected him."

"You will fulfil his commission?"

"Surely."

"I—I wish he had said a word—only one word—about *it*," said Susan; "still we will hope for the best, James."

"And hoping and praying for the best, perhaps the best will come in good time."

"I think so."

The sister appeared more sanguine than her brother, which was strange, he being of a deeper and stronger faith, as he was of a deeper and stronger character. He could not see, however, what the world was to make of Robert Bayford; for Robert had been spared troubles till then, and at life's minor vexations, which we all share pretty equally, he had invariably laughed. It was certain that he took

no comfort from Robert's letter. And yet there was nothing in it to alarm one—a very simple, straightforward epistle, dwelling chiefly upon the Chipnam lectures, with a postscript added concerning his villa, which was to be completed as quickly as possible, he wrote. It was dated “London”—no less vague address was afforded his brother. Robert did not want as much consolation as could be sent through the post for a penny.

Robert had remembered that he had promised to deliver a lecture on “India” at the town-hall; and being in no mood for addressing a Chipnam audience, and fearing that Mr. Chark and Mr. Alland might consider he was still bound to deliver the lecture, he had urged his brother to make his apologies, and claim that his name might be withdrawn. “If they cannot find a substitute and insist, I will come. I shall know by the next number of the *Chipnam Gazette*—which I can see at a news-room in Leicester Square—whether my services can be dispensed with or not.”

Mr. James Bayford had an unpleasant task

to perform. To call on Mr. Chark or Mr. Alland—he considered both of them the promoters of the scheme—and state his brother's wish, and more than his brother's wish, as will be presently seen. There being one way more unpleasant than the other, James Bayford chose it, and went one morning to Mr. Alland's villa.

He was anxious to explain to Mr. Alland, because—although as a minister he would not have owned it—he had taken a dislike to him. He had a firm belief in Mr. Alland's conduct towards Miss Saville not having been quite fair and disinterested—that Alland was a young man whose vanity had led him to pay a little attention to Amy, and that a flirtation had ensued, ending in Amy's heart being stolen away. In his own opinion—though he kept it to himself—it had been rather a black piece of business. Until there was more proof, he could not say so, or hint so by a word to any one but Alland himself—he even checked Susan in a hasty comment on Mr. Alland's conduct, and begged her not to judge too hastily. But in his heart he had

judged Mr. Alland, and all the respect that he had been lately inclined to entertain towards him, he resigned again. Alland was a man he could not work with, even for good!

He sent in his card to the rector, and immediately afterwards the servant returned and ushered him into the library. A handsomely furnished library, five times the size of James Bayford's—a luxurious place for a student, and looking more for show than work. And yet Mr. Alland was working busily at the highly-polished rosewood secretaire—there were books of reference piled round him, and sheets of MS. accumulating at his side. He rose as Mr. Bayford entered, and would have extended his hand, had there not been a coldness and a hardness in his visitor's demeanour which held him back. He felt that this was the man again with whom he had been at daggers-drawn for years—the man who preached at his doctrines and despised them, and thought his teaching a snare and a delusion.

“Take a seat, Mr. Bayford.”

“Thank you, sir,” was the reply, “I shall

not detain you many minutes, and would prefer to stand. I have received a letter from my brother."

"Indeed," said the rector, with more animation, "I hope he is well?"

"Quite well," answered Mr. Bayford; "he has written to me concerning the lecture that he promised to give at the town-hall. He naturally wishes to withdraw his name from the programme."

"I am very sorry."

"It is easy to find a substitute, Mr. Alland."

"Oh! yes, yes—it is not that."

"Many of your friends about here are gentlemen of education, and I have no doubt will be happy to join in any scheme calculated to advance the thoughts of those whom you are anxious to bring together?"

"Yes," was the absent answer. He did not see the drift of Mr. Bayford's remarks, or rather he was not paying much attention.

"So I have been thinking, after all, how much better it would be to leave the church to manage all this, and to withdraw my own name with my brother's," said Bayford; "I

do not wish to throw any impediment in the way of your success, but if you can give another lecture yourself, or find a substitute for me, it would be conferring a favour to allow me to withdraw from an arrangement to which I too hastily agreed."

"Have you spoken of this to Mr. Chark, sir?"

"No."

"I shall see him this evening. Of course we can dispense with your services, much as we may regret them. Consider yourself free, Mr. Bayford."

"Thank you."

"Oh! no thanks are requisite, sir," was the airy rejoinder, "I am not the prime mover of this lecture theory. I had many objections at first, and waived them to oblige my old friend, who was anxious that church and chapel should work together in this matter, to prove that sectarian prejudices did not keep us wholly apart when the object was praiseworthy. I regret that the example will be weakened. I heartily regret ever having had anything to do with the Utopian folly."

"You imply that the revival of my sectarian prejudices leads me to recede."

"You have implied them yourself, Mr. Bayford."

"It is a mistake," said the other warmly, "you are too quick at judging me, sir ; but seeing that we do not understand, and have no faith, in each other, it is perhaps natural. I withdraw, because I cannot work with you ; and it is painful for me and my friends to see our names in conjunction when the townsfolk are whispering how shabbily an Alland has served a Bayford."

"The townsfolk are liars, then !"

They were both preachers, but they were both young men, in whose veins the blood moved far from sluggishly — both high-spirited men, capable of defending themselves.

"Still they talk of us."

"From what I have heard of your character, Mr. Bayford, I should have thought that you would have been above listening to the tattle of mendacious gossips."

"Their gossip has not troubled me, but my

brother's sudden departure has. I have my own belief that either vanity, or want of thought, or an affection which you could not withstand, has brought much unhappiness to my brother ; and as I cannot work heartily with you, sir, I wish to withdraw."

"An unwilling helper is as bad as an enemy."

He had been standing all this time ; he turned now, went back to the library table, and took his seat thereat. He considered the interview at an end.

James Bayford had treated on matters personal, and told him that he had no faith in him. He could not prolong an interview with such a man. Of his own sense of rectitude he had the highest opinion ; he was a proud man, very well assured that it was impossible for him to make a false step.

James Bayford had broken the ice, and was severe on the subject. He returned to the charge, and followed on to the library table, on which he leaned his hand, and confronted Mr. Alland once more.

"Have you nothing to explain, Mr. Alland?"

Alland looked up almost fiercely.

"Nothing, sir."

"I have been anxious to think well of you lately, Mr. Alland. Candidly, I am troubled lest in my heart I have misjudged you."

"Am I answerable to you for my conduct, Mr. Bayford?"

"No, sir,—to your God."

"To my God, then, I will acquit myself."

"You WILL acquit yourself! That is a bold assertion, which the most upright of us might fear to utter as you have done."

Mr. Alland winced at the reproof. He had spent so much of his life in reproving others, that to be told he was not infallible by this dissenter shook his nerves a little, especially as the dissenter was right in this instance. Preachers must occasionally find it a little strange to have no one to tell them what miserable sinners they are, or to warn them of the earnest efforts even required of them, to keep in the narrow path and work upwards.

Mr. Alland felt it extremely strange, but he only bent a little more intently over his manuscript. I have said that he was a proud man.

“You have nothing more to say to me, Mr. Alland?”

“Nothing more, sir.”

“Good morning.”

“Good morning.”

So the combatants parted—neither vanquished. It was a drawn battle.

CHAPTER II.

SELF-INQUIRY.

THE Reverend Frederick Alland continued to write after the departure of the young dissenting minister—to write very steadily and persistently, digging his pen into the paper with a vehemence perfectly unnecessary. Five minutes after the door had closed upon the dissenter, the pen, or the thoughts which had sent it travelling over the MS., seemed to flag; once or twice he paused, put back his fair hair from his high white forehead, and stared very intently at the closely-written lines. Coming to a full-stop in the middle of his compositions was not a habit of his, and

annoyed him very much. He had made up his mind that day for a long morning's work, undisturbed by even the ghost of a visitor. And then James Bayford, for the first time in his life, had paid him a visit, and, for the first time in his own life, he had been told that he was no better than other men. Nay, he must be a trifle worse, if it were possible for any one in Chipnam to believe the improbable story related of him—believe it, as this rude man scrupled not to intimate that he believed.

Alland was labouring on his greatest work—a work that he had built all his hopes upon, learned, critical and eloquent, which the world was to read and applaud and talk about. He must not hurry that work, or write it when the mood to wander away from the subject was on him. And how his thoughts did wander away that day, to be sure!

He laid his pen aside at last, and, angry with himself at his abstraction, pushed away the paper, and made room for one elbow on the secretaire. Taking his chin in his hand, and staring very intently before him, he gave

up all thoughts of his work, and turned his mind to the incident of Mr. Bayford's visit. To all that Mr. Bayford had said to him, and to more that he had implied—it was a strange, incomprehensible piece of business altogether.

They were talking of him in Chipnam town—especially the dissenters, who had always cavilled at his sermons and his choral services. They were whispering that he was an insidious, dishonourable man, who had taken advantage of the absence of Robert Bayford to make love to his betrothed. Heavens! they thought all that, and told all that to one another, and believed it! He was a passionate man, for he gave an impetuous stamp to his foot as the force of his own imagination drew the true picture of all that was passing in the little world without.

And why should they not believe it, he thought? Had he been so careful of every look and word, as to sit there wholly blameless? Robert Bayford, a man whom he had taken to strangely, had suspected him and told him so on the hill-side; Bayford's brother, doubtless his sister, attributed the

same unworthiness to him—what did Mr. Chark think?—above all, what did Amy Saville think? He passed in review all his past conduct to Amy Saville, and all that he had thought of her. It was very strange that his heart beat a little faster when he reflected upon her; albeit, he was wholly blameless, and he who had thrown the first stone at him but a coward and a slanderer. He had seen her almost every day from the time he first came to Chipnam; they had met at her guardian's house, at the Sunday school, in church, at the choral rehearsals, in the streets and lanes of Chipnam. They had always been good friends; she was an earnest girl, alive to the responsibilities of religion, and anxious to assist in the most glorious of life's duties—aiding and helping sinners to repent and have faith in God's mercy. He had been struck with her enthusiasm, and thought how good she was—as good as she was beautiful. Only a little while ago he had caught himself wondering if he should ever marry, and why he was so hard to please. It had struck him then that it was very dull and lonely in that great

villa, and that a wife would add to his happiness and brighten his home. But, then, what lady was he to choose? He was a man of taste and hard to please. He was a man of observation, and quick to detect those who angled for him, and gave themselves airs in his presence, and affected religion to attract him. He had seen much of frivolity and deception, and those that were really earnest were not to his taste, with *one* exception. And that one exception was certainly Amy Saville. She was engaged to be married to another; but it had struck him more than once that, had she not been betrothed, he might have made her the magnanimous offer of his hand. She was all that a minister could desire for a wife.

They were saying in Chipnam now that Amy Saville was in love with him, and had found it impossible to continue her engagement with Robert Bayford. His colour heightened, and even his face brightened, when he reflected upon it. They were saying that he had used every effort to win her love perhaps—God knows he was innocent of that—

and if she loved him it was an affection that had stolen upon her unconsciously, and she had only awakened to a sense of her position when Bayford had returned from India. Poor girl, she must have been sadly tried—if he had only known all this a year ago, he might have adopted a different course, and assisted Robert Bayford's wooing. But he had been very friendly to Mr. Chark's ward—they had been almost brother and sister to each other; he could remember, the more he analyzed his feelings, that his happiest evenings had been spent in her society—in those Beethoven evenings when he sat by her side, and was spell-bound and entranced by her music.

The Reverend Frederick Alland could not think deliberately any longer. He got up and paced the room. He opened the window and went down the stone steps into the garden, and on with soldier-like strides to the very extremity of his grounds. Backwards and forwards, like a restless spirit wandered Mr. Alland; forgetful of all the dreams of fame which his book was to bring him—of

all the sermons for ensuing Sundays—of all the embarrassments which the secession of Mr. Bayford from the lectures might create—mindful only that Amy Saville had broken off her engagement, and was free, and, rumour said, was in love with him !

Well, he had not thought much of it before ; it was very pleasant to be loved. To think he had only to ask and to have one of the prettiest and most lovable girls in England. He entered the house, seized his hat, and went out again at the front door. He was only going to have a little talk with Mr. Chark on the incidents of that morning—Mr. Chark would be at home, he felt assured.

The incumbent was at home. He found him at the villa, as he had anticipated, sitting in the shady little summer-house at the side of his house, enjoying the scenery before him, like a true lover of everything that was beautiful, as he was.

“ Good morning, Alland—I was thinking of you only half a minute since.”

“ I thought that I would take a stroll in this direction, having news to communicate.”

"I hope it's good news. I have had enough of bad news lately."

"You will think it news very unfavourable to the chances of our lectures' success. Mr. James Bayford has asked, almost requested, that his own and his brother's name should be withdrawn from the list of lecturers."

"Well," with a little sigh, "it was to be expected, I suppose?"

"We shall not find it very hard to find a substitute. If it be necessary, I will lecture in their stead in both cases."

"Yes, yes; I have no doubt," said the incumbent, absently; "my dear Alland," he added, with more energy, "what a sad and unaccountable piece of business this has been!"

"Yes."

"He was a man that half the girls in the parish would have jumped at—given their ears to have had fallen in love with them. I was beginning to love him like my own son."

"Miss Saville—I trust that she is well?"

"She is far from well. She is unsettled

and strange, and not her usual self. But then the days are early yet, Mr. Alland."

"Yes—certainly."

The days were early yet! But if the past days, wherein she had fretted against the chains that had galled her, had vanished for ever, surely these early days should be a time of sunshine wherein to rejoice at the liberty gained? It struck Mr. Alland so, until he went more deeply into the matter, and thought she might be thinking of *him* now! He knew he was embarrassed then, and that Mr. Chark detected the rising colour that mounted to his face.

"Mr. Chark, may I put a question or two to you?"

"A hundred, if you like, Alland."

"If it be a leading question which you do not feel called upon to reply to, reprove me by your silence."

Mr. Chark settled his gold-rimmed spectacles more firmly on his nose. He knew all that Mr. Alland was going to say.

"Are you aware of the reasons for this sud-

den disruption of Miss Saville's engagement to Mr. Bayford?"

"I am not."

"Can you guess them?"

"I think I can. I have not tried to go deeply into the matter—on the contrary, I have shunned it."

"Let me tell you some strange assertions made by Mr. James Bayford this morning."

He related very frankly and clearly the conversation between him and the dissenting minister, and then said—

"Now, I put it to you, Mr. Chark, you my best friend in this town, whether any action of mine has ever suggested a suspicion that I was too particular in my attentions to Miss Saville? Have I by a word or look implied that I was in love with her—that to gain her love would be the happiest moment of my life?"

"My dear Alland, I am a weak old man now, but if you had, I think I should have tried to kick you out of the house."

"And yet very little was said of the engagement to me. There was some talk now

and then of a Robert Bayford coming back some day, a gentleman whom Miss Saville had not seen since she was sixteen years of age."

"I did not repeat his name too often. I had had no knowledge of Mr. Bayford's character, and considered the engagement a trifle too unrealistic for every-day wear. His letters came very regularly, however, and I think sufficient was said even to you. Alland, I hope there was?"

"There was."

"I knew it," said Mr. Chark, very much relieved.

"Still, since the engagement has been broken off, there have been many thoughts to trouble me, Mr. Chark. The tattle of the town annoys me; my own thoughts distress me; the uncertainty of all this keeps me feverish and excited. Now that Miss Saville is free, I cannot help thinking of her as one whom I could love very tenderly and truly—one who could make me a very happy man."

"Alland—all this *since*?"

"I felt that she was removed from me prior to this. I had no thoughts save that

a brother might have for a sister he loved very dearly—on my honour that! But the scene has changed, Mr. Chark, and I lay bare the secrets of my heart to you.”

Mr. Chark seized the hand which Alland had extended to him—the young man’s earnestness affected him. He could see what was best for his ward—what had troubled and tortured her for years perhaps? Out of evil was advancing the good, he thought—he thanked God that Alland loved, or was going to love, his ward.

“Where is Miss Saville?” asked the rector.

“Somewhere about the house, I believe.”

“Perhaps, if it would not excite her too much, it would be as well——”

He paused and looked hard at the guardian for his consent.

Mr. Chark reflected.

“Well, perhaps it *would* be as well!”

Mr. Alland hurriedly left Mr. Chark, and went through the window, always wide open for these pantomimic performances. What a

deal that window has had to do with our story !

After the rector had gone, Mr. Chark felt rather nervous at the precipitate manner in which matters had been discussed. The rector was as straightforward as Robert Bayford—went direct to the fountain-head and struck at the one subject that was uppermost, finishing for better or worse in an instant. Perhaps it would be as well !—he was not quite certain, now Mr. Alland had gone. Was not quite certain that Amy would thank him for this precipitate act. Still, the old love was off; and if this new one had been ever in her thoughts, better to be on with *him*, and settle down into a new engagement, that would end more happily than the first ! This enthusiastic dreamy ward had fallen in love with her minister, who was so learned and delivered such powerful sermons—well for her that the rector could come, as he had come that morning, and tell her that he loved her, and could not be happy without her consent to be his.

He sat and fidgeted in the summer-house,

awaiting Mr. Alland's return ; he took off his spectacles, and polished the glasses with his silk handkerchief ; he got up and peeped round at the open window ; he sat down again and hoped all was progressing favourably, that Alland had not become nervous at the last, postponed the attack, and was sitting very composedly with his hat on his knees, talking to Amy about the weather, or what a number of colds the Sunday-school children had got in their heads. He hoped—here he came again !

Mr. Alland advanced rapidly, with his head thrown very much back, and his hat wedged very tightly over his forehead. He was as white as a ghost—the ordeal had been gone through, at any rate.

“Well, Alland ?—well ?” Mr. Chark inquired impatiently, “what is the news ?”

“The news is, that Miss Saville is honoured—very highly honoured”—with a great gulp down of the objectionable phrase—“by the offer of my hand, and that she—she declines to accept it. Good morning.”

“Go—o’od morning,” stammered the amazed

incumbent, as Mr. Alland flashed by him, opened the gate, let it clang to, and went, hop-skip-and-jump, down the hill.

CHAPTER III.

MORE LOVE-MAKING.

THE lectures in the town-hall proved, after all, a dead failure. The lecturers were disapproved of, and the public expressed its opinion after an awkward fashion that it has of its own. The Reverend Frederick Alland tried the subject of "The Holy Land," in lieu of Mr. Bayford, and, to his horror and astonishment, was hissed for his trouble. Not that he did not speak of "The Holy Land" with much fervour, and described the holy places with a skill at word-painting which should have commanded respect, but that the towns-folk brought matters

personal to bear on the question, and cried down Mr. Alland as much as possible.

His own flock stood by him, and tried to resist public opinion ; but a great many of the poorer and ignorant class of dissenters had assembled, and every navvy in the neighbourhood was there this time.

In a country town it is remarkable how news spreads, and magnifies by spreading. How prone human nature—of course only human nature in the country—is inclined to believe every tittle of the rumour that has set the town by the ears ! Even Mr. Alland's flock joked about it at their homes, and thought what a capital bit of fun it was for the churchman to cut out the dissenter's brother, and how natural for Miss Saville to prefer the Reverend Frederick Alland to him. The dissenters were against him, and thought it was like the underhanded Puseyitish ways of "my gentleman ;" and the navvies took counsel together over their beer mugs, and thought "that a mon who'd gaw and tak' anoother mon's gal clean awor fro' him, wor a gallows sneak—dorm his eyes !" So they went to see

“the gallows sneak,” and to join in the sibilations against him, and even to shout forth uncomplimentary remarks, which were chiefly in the Lancashire dialect, and therefore not generally understood. Mr. Alland weathered the storm well. In a storm he braced up his energy, looked the adverse elements in the face, and felt strong to resist. In a greater storm, perhaps, this man’s courage and nerve would take him through, and set him above it, as it took him through this minor one, which only offended him so far as it aroused his contempt.

He went on with his lecture very coolly and composedly after the first surprise at his reception was over. When the audience in the body of the hall would not listen to him, he faced his friends on the platform, and concluded his lecture to them. Then he went home a shade more pale than he had issued forth that evening, and reflected seriously upon the case in the study, into which we have no further occasion to intrude.

Josiah Glade was present at that particular lecture, and although gratified to see how

correctly his lugubrious prophecies had turned out, was pained at the ill-feeling shown by the people to one who had sacrificed much of his time to amuse them. Glade was a hot-headed man, but his sense of what was fair and just was aroused at the attack, and he did his best to stem the tide setting in against the Reverend Frederick Alland. If the tide were too strong, still he did his best, and Mr. Alland noted his efforts in the body of the hall, and kept them in grateful remembrance long after the cabinet-maker had forgotten them.

The next lecture, in the ensuing week, was by a prosy old gentleman of fortune—a friend of Alland's, and a resident near Chipnam. The subject was on "The French Revolution," concerning which nobody in Chipnam cared, which half had never heard about, and certainly did not want to hear. The audience was miserably small, and disgracefully inattentive. There was only one representative of the very lowest orders amongst the knot of listeners, and he sat cracking nuts all the evening, and flinging the shells right and left of him. It

was anticipated that Mr. Alland's next appearance would be followed by a second storm, and Mr. Chark did his best to urge his reverend friend to give up the attempt. But Mr. Alland rather relished the excitement, and refused to make any further alterations in the programme—he had pledged himself to appear as a substitute for Mr. Robert Bayford—he was a man who always kept his word.

He kept his word, but there was no storm, and the two policemen in private clothes came in for an admirably delivered lecture without any disturbance from the masses. Between this lecture and the one on the Holy Land, Mr. James Bayford had alluded in his pulpit to the disgraceful scene in the town-hall on the first occasion, and hoped, for the credit of the town, that it would not occur again. The dissenters took his teaching to heart and kept away—the navvies by that time had worked their way farther down the line, and did not care for too long a walk when they were so near the Chingley beer-shops; so Mr. Alland lectured to a quiet and select audience, for the last time that season.

The scheme was abandoned as futile after that; the town-hall was no more lighted up on Thursday evenings; the summer died away; the autumn came in with a hurricane, and blew the chimney-pots into the High Street; Robert Bayford still remained in London, writing often from that city, giving always that indefinite address, and promising ever to be soon in Garthshire.

The villa was finished and furnished by the autumn—a handsome red-brick mansion, standing in its own grounds—certainly the finest house within twenty miles of Chipnam. One or two servants had arrived from London to take charge of the establishment till Mr. Bayford's arrival, and a white-haired, fat-faced man, who called himself the butler, seemed to be standing at the gate all day long looking out for the master, so long a time in coming home.

James Bayford visited the house once or twice a week, and sought to obtain information from the servants respecting his brother's whereabouts; but they were as much in the dark as himself, and were not half so curious,

for they received their wages regularly, and found little to do for them. They had only one complaint to make to each other—"It was so orful slow!" If the horses had only been sent down, they might have enjoyed themselves a bit by keeping them in exercise. .

James Bayford and his sister Susan took it in turns to visit the house, and look after Robert's interest, meeting there very often Josiah Glade. The firm of Kernett and Glade had received orders to furnish the establishment—orders from "London," enclosing a heavy cheque on account.

"We are commissioned to spare no expense, sir," said Glade, showing one of these letters to the brother; "everything befitting the residence of a gentleman is to be supplied. Any expenses under ten thousand pounds he will be satisfied with, and consider fair."

James Bayford shook his head. He could not see occasion for all this display—this grandeur wherein to enwrap a solitary life. There were to be no wife and children for Robert now, unless he brought a wife from London, which his brother did not believe—

why settle down to a great establishment like this, and lose the best of his days in inaction? Surely there was something better for him to do?

He wrote to "Robert Bayford, London," to this effect. He chanced the letter finding him—perhaps Robert's name was known to the postal authorities, and the letter might reach his brother's hands. But the homily was returned him from the dead-letter office, and Robert Bayford lost the good counsel his brother had intended.

"Will the complete furnishing of this house cost anything like ten thousand pounds?" asked Mr. Bayford one day of Josiah Glade.

"I think not. I think it would be a pity to lavish so much money upon it."

"Robert is unsettled now, Glade," said the minister; "this may be but a mere freak of his, which, dying out, may leave him poor. I have no knowledge of the extent of his income."

"I have been speaking to Mr. Kernett about this," said Glade; "he thinks we have only to obey orders. I don't like obeying

orders in this blind fashion," he added, with his usual sharpness.

"If you could furnish the rooms plainly and well, I do not think he would notice the difference," said James Bayford.

"We'll try, Mr. Bayford."

There was certainly some one at "Saville House"—it had been christened so before the breaking up of the engagement, and "Saville House" still remained chiselled on the stone pillars each side of the great carriage gates—who was acquainted with Mr. Robert Bayford's address, unless Robert had been fortunate enough to run across a highly-intelligent spirit-rapper, who let him know how matters were going on.

"Furnish the house with the best," he wrote to Messrs. Kernett and Glade. "I understand that you are scamping the place; I enclose drawings of some articles that will be required."

And the drawings could not be carried out in an economical manner, and Mr. Kernett at least executed a comic dance of delight in his counting-house. There had not been such an

order given in Chipnam, since Chipnam had been a place worth opening business in.

It will be readily seen that Josiah Glade had obtained a great rise in life, and had reason to be grateful to Mr. Kernett for his liberal offer of partnership. And he *was* grateful, although he had been ever a man sparing of thanks, and was as abrupt and decisive to Mr. Kernett, and expressed his opinion as forcibly, as in the days when he was Mr. Kernett's foreman and managing man.

There had been a long talk in the office of the *Chipnam Gazette* concerning Josiah's prospects *in futuro*, and many opinions expressed as to his altered position. Josiah heard all the opinions, and then kept to his own, after a long conversation with his father, in which his father for once agreed.

Josiah Glade rented a little house on the high road to Chingley, half a mile further out of Chipnam than the residence of Robert Bayford, Esq. A small, neatly-furnished house, with his sister for housekeeper—thus breaking up the Glade family into two sections for a time. Josiah had taken the house in the hope

of luring his mother from the town now and then—of inducing both his mother and father to venture more often from the hot printing-office, wherein they had been located some years.

He even insisted that the *Chipnam Gazette* should be given up for good ; but the Glades were never always of one mind, and the old gentleman shook his head, and reminded his son that there was much to do yet—and much to earn. He ever satirized the new ambitions of his son, until that gentleman, whose health was now thoroughly established, flung himself out of the room, and nearly banged the house down in shutting the door after him.

At Savillè House it was necessary for Mr. Glade to superintend alterations, new erections, fittings, &c. ; and here, as we have said, he met frequently Mr. Bayford and his sister.

It very often happened that Susan Bayford would be quitting the house at the same time as Josiah Glade, and that the latter would accompany her as far as her home, walking by her side, and arguing all the way.

"I don't think your better fortune has improved you so much as might have been expected," Susan said one evening to him, when he had been unusually satirical.

"There is no difference in me, Miss Bayford. I am never likely to change."

"When you were but a working cabinet-maker and upholsterer, your bad tempers did not matter so much," she said, quietly ; "people set it down to the natural irascibility of your disposition."

"What do they set it down to now ? "

"The pride of an upstart at his sudden rise in life."

"Very well, Miss Bayford, I did not expect quite so fierce an attack from you. You should have known me better than this."

"I don't say that I consider you an upstart. I only say I don't believe you have improved."

"I shall be always the same. I don't want to improve."

"I need not trouble you to come any further with me to-night, Mr. Glade."

"Oh ! very well, Miss."

Exit Josiah Glade brusquely, to meet Miss

Bayford a day or two hence with a perfect unconsciousness of having behaved rudely the last time he had seen her.

Susan Bayford sometimes told her brother that she found this Josiah Glade very hard to understand, and that she believed his bad temper must be catching, for he always put her out, and made her fingers tingle to box his ears.

“He certainly *is* rather aggravating.”

“Sometimes, do you know, James, I am almost wicked enough to think I hate him,” she said with a scared look on her prim face.

James Bayford laughed.

“My dear Susan, you have not energy enough in your nature to hate any one,” he said.

“I thought he would be a more amiable young man when he was Mr. Kernett’s partner,” said she almost sadly; “for I fancied it was only his position that kept him so ill-tempered.”

“Upon my honour, you have been making quite a study of our hot-headed but good-hearted friend, Susan.”

"I!" cried Susan, very much shocked;
"my dear James, how very foolish you are!
He's the only young man in the town, I can't
bear."

"Humph!" said her brother.

This dialogue occurred over the tea-table.
After tea James Bayford went on a visiting
mission, and was met by the late subject of
conversation.

"Good evening, Mr. Bayford," he said, "I
have been waiting for you to come out this
hour and a half. What a time you have been
over that tea!"

"Why didn't you call?"

"I had a reason for it," said he, with even
more impetuosity than he was accustomed to
exhibit; "I didn't want to see your sister."

"Indeed!"

"I wanted to see *you*, Mr. Bayford. I
wanted your advice."

"The best that is in my power to afford,
you shall have, Glade."

"I've been thinking of Miss Susan a good deal
lately;—I've thought of her, if you must know,
for the last two or three years; but she was above

me, and I kept my ideas to myself. I never expected my—my love for her to come to anything, until Mr. Kernett was good enough to take me into partnership, and then I thought of her in earnest. That's how we stand now—what is to be done?"

Mr. Glade was greatly excited. He flung his arms right and left in a very impulsive manner; he took off his hat and twirled it round and round in his hand, firework fashion.

"Well, I don't know what is to be done," said the minister, after a moment's reflection.

"I have a house of my own now," said Glade; "and though my income is only just sufficient to keep a wife,—I am paying off an old debt, sir, that I shall tell you more about when—when I know more about it myself;—still I shall be better off in a year or two. You don't think me too ambitious, sir?"

And Josiah Glade, for the first time in his life, was strangely humble to his minister.

"Ambitious, Glade? Oh! no," said he quickly.

"Well, what is it?—why don't you say?"

"What do they say at the *Chipnam Gazette* office?"

"I have not told them yet, sir, it's no business of theirs."

"They'll not object, I dare say. Have you mentioned this to Dorcas?"

"She found it out," said Glade, as though she had grievously wronged him; "she had no business to find it out before I told her, but she did!"

"I wonder whether Susan has found it out?" said James Bayford drily.

"She hasn't an idea, sir."

"It's not for me to decide on a question so momentous, Glade," said Mr. Bayford; "there's the house, and there's Susan within it. She's old enough to know her own mind, and to answer for herself. Good evening."

"Then—then you will not object if she should say 'Yes?'"

"Certainly not."

"Thank you, sir—thank you," said Glade, shaking hands with the minister; "it's very kind of you. There's—ahem—your brother, though?"

"He will leave Susan to her own selection, like a wise man as he is, I think."

"Perhaps you will turn back with me, sir, just for a moment?"

"Upon my word, Glade, I have not the time."

"I—I thought you might put in a good word for me, sir."

"You are quite able to act for yourself, Glade."

Mr. Glade did not appear to think so as he stood in the country road, looking after Mr. Bayford. For a man so naturally impetuous, he seemed strangely afraid to attack the heart of the demure spinster in the cottage. He wandered up and down for a quarter of an hour or more, and then his courage coming all of a lump, he dashed at the gate with his double fist, struck it open, ran across the road, and hung on to the knocker.

"Where's Miss Bayford?" he asked of the servant, who appeared with rather a bewildered expression of countenance.

"In the parlour, sir."

"That'll do. I'll announce myself."

And he was in the parlour, the instant afterwards.

“Good gracious! Mr. Glade—what’s the matter?” cried Susan, alarmed at his appearance and his particularly fierce looks.

“You said that I had a bad temper, Miss Bayford?”

“Ye-es—I think I did.”

“Can’t you put up with it, or turn it into a good one by degrees? Being unsettled has kept it so long a nuisance to myself and my friends. I want you to be my wife, Miss Bayford, some day.”

“Oh! my goodness—oh! how dreadful!”

Susan Bayford sank into a chair, and took one little white hand in the other, and pressed them very tightly together. She had been ever proud of the equanimity she could assume on important occasions; here was her greatest trial, but she stood it well.

“Ja-ames—James?” she murmured.

“I have seen him and told him all. Miss Bayford, I hope my bad temper will not be the ruin of my hopes in you. I hope you’ll

say 'Yes'—I expect you to say 'Yes!'" he bawled.

"Oh! do go away now."

"I shall do no such thing! I—I hope you won't be hard with me for all my past rudeness. I—I have fancied, just now and then, that had I been better off, a gentleman fit for you, you wouldn't have said 'No.' And you won't say 'No,' now I am able to keep a wife?"

"I cannot leave James yet a while, Mr. Glade. I do not know that I shall ever leave him."

"Not yet a while—well, not just yet. But say I'm not hateful!"

"No one is hateful to me, sir!"

"And some day, when it can all be comfortably arranged, you'll say 'Yes?'"

"Go out of the house now, Mr. Glade. You must not stop here, and James away."

"You'll say 'Yes,' then, before I go? Just to drive me mad with delight, Miss Bayford?"

"Go out of the house, then."

Glade went obediently into the passage—outside into the garden in front of the house, Susan following him.

"Well?" he said, turning round almost savagely.

"Yes—some day!"

And the door banged too, and shut him out.

Glade went straight to the *Chipnam Gazette* office to communicate the news to his parents, like a dutiful son as he was at heart. A busy day for old Mr. Glade, which he had spent in the printing-office, being short of hands.

"I want you upstairs, father."

"Presently—presently. You'll find your mother there."

"Come up at once—I'm in a hurry."

He followed the son, who took his place between him and his mother, and laid a hand on each.

"Mother—father—I have some news for you."

Mr. Glade senior summoned his Socratic demeanour. Mrs. Glade made up her mind to dislike it, whatever it was.

"I have asked Miss Bayford to marry me."

Mrs. Glade burst into tears, and began

rocking herself upon the chair; Mr. Glade commenced buttoning his seedy coat up to his chin, for no purpose whatever that was apparent.

"Mrs. G.," he said at last, "the sooner you leave off that noise the better."

"Well, I'm sure!"

"It's perfectly unnecessary."

"Very well, sir—very well," said Mrs. Glade, looking a week's silent system at her lord and husband.

"This is a surprise, Josiah, to—your mother!"

"Susan is just the wife for me."

"Ay," said his father.

"I shall be the happiest and luckiest young fellow in the world."

Mr. Glade nodded.

"We are so admirably calculated for each other."

"Ah!"

"You see all this—even you?"

"I see it's the worst thing that could have happened."

"WHAT!"

"It's my idea—perhaps it's a wrong one."

"It will make no difference to my old intentions—our old intentions."

"God bless you, my boy!—I never thought of that for an instant. But still it's an unfortunate mess. Why didn't you tell me which way matters were drifting, Jo?"

"I didn't see the necessity."

"Oh! but there was one. There, go home to Dorcas, and leave your mother and me to talk this over between us."

Josiah Glade left his father's house very much puzzled. He had an idea that his father had talked like that to aggravate him. His father who, with a gentleness that would have been very new and strange for the son to witness, had drawn to the side of the peevish Mrs. Glade, and laid his hands on hers almost affectionately.

"There's nothing to fret about, old lady. It can't be helped now!" he said; "and perhaps it is—it is coming right enough!"

CHAPTER IV.

ROBERT'S RETURN.

LATE in the autumn, Robert Bayford took possession of his mansion. He went direct thither, and it was only from Josiah Glade that the dissenting minister received the intelligence of his brother's arrival.

James Bayford did not relish this first step of Robert's—it evinced a change in him already, and he had been fearing a change all the long time since they had shaken hands last. It was not like the old times, when Robert would have come first to him of all men, and taken his place at his side, and called the little cottage “Home!”

“ Well, we must not take any offence at the slight, Susan,” said James to his sister ; “ he’s unsettled and strange yet. By-and-bye he will be again the Robert Bayford we have always known. He will not come to see us, girl—you and I will storm him in his grand stronghold early to-morrow.”

“ Not to-night ?” asked her sister, with a little uncharacteristic impatience.

“ I think we will wait till the morning. He may be fatigued with his journey, or he may possibly—though I wouldn’t build upon the contingency—stroll this way later in the evening.”

James Bayford did not appear to think so, however ; he went out when the old family clock on the stairs was striking seven ; and Susan, accustomed to his “ goings and comings” at all hours of the day and night, did not suspect that he had started on a mission to Saville House.

Yes, he had made up his mind to proceed thither at once, and the rain and wind that met him in his own front garden as he closed the door, did not deter him from his project.

He had been ever a man under whose feet the grass had had little chance of growing ; he did not know what a day or an hour might bring forth. Robert had returned to Chipnam, and had gone at once to his stately mansion on the Chingley-road—gone with many morbid thoughts, he fancied, which, brooding on, might produce evil ; he did not know in what guise, but the idea had occurred to him, and he could not shake it off.

It was a wild night for visiting, but he had made up his mind, and there was nothing to deter him. The rain rushed at him under the umbrella and wetted his legs ; and the wind swooped down upon him from the passes in the hills, met him on the high road, and turned his umbrella inside out. He had not remembered being out on so rough a night, since a little girl died two years ago come the winter time, and he had been sent for hurriedly by the parents, their child having asked very anxiously to see him again. He went out then with very sad and solemn thoughts ; he had them again, singularly enough, that night, although there was no death-bed visit

to pay—only, perhaps, some dead hopes to mourn over with his brother! It was strange that he should have the idea that Robert was mourning for the loss of his betrothed; long afterwards, he thought it more strange. He rehearsed on his way a few consolatory Bible passages which he considered peculiarly suited to his brother's condition, and went on with his maimed umbrella, butting his way through the wind and rain as best he could. Nothing particularly striking to a casual reader happened that night; albeit it was a memorable one to James Bayford. A night he never forgot, that a storm of wind and rain in that hilly district always reminded him of. Up the hill on which the town was built went the minister—meeting the water streaming down there at a headlong pace. Most of the townsfolk had closed their shutters and their doors; only the lights from the inn windows and gas-lamps, were reflected on the wet red tiles of the causeway, and in the sheet of troubled water surging down the road. Scarcely a living being was about; under the portico of the market the one police-

man on duty was talking to the ostler of the Chipnam arms, who had run across from the stable-yard opposite ; and there was the stable dog sitting coolly and complacently in the middle of the road, perfectly indifferent to the weather or his own forlorn position in society. Perhaps a dog who had been crossed in love, like Robert Bayford !

Through the town, and on to the Chingley-road, where the wind and rain met with no resistance, save from trees and hedge-rows, and rioted amongst them madly. James Bayford came upon one tree torn from its mother-earth, wherein it had been rooted fifty years, and lying across the hedge and footpath. He had walked amongst its branches before he was aware of it, and torn his umbrella in four places.

“ I hope Robert will appreciate my damp journey in search of him,” he said, with a forced laugh, as he struggled out of the tree and made a *détour* to the opposite side. He was inclined to consider himself getting into better spirits as he neared his journey’s end. He was endeavouring to shake off the

impression of something wrong which awaited him there—something not to be prepared against at that time.

Before the mansion at last, and plodding round the carriage drive; finally, with one foot on the steps looking towards the house, for the first time giving signs of light and life within. More light and life, perhaps, than James Bayford had anticipated; for he lowered his umbrella to obtain a better view of things, and took no heed of the heavy rain that descended on him as he stood there. The front room—the dining-room, he believed—was ablaze with gas, and the light streamed through the window into the dark night. Though the curtains were undrawn, and he could see the massive ormolu chandelier suspended from the ceiling, his position hindered him from seeing his brother's guests, who were merry there, and laughing vociferously. One voice rang out in a shrill falsetto like a woman's every now and then, and Robert's deep yet hearty laugh—he could have sworn to it anywhere—echoed in the midst, and thrilled to the heart of the listener.

He had forgotten all about the rain, and stood drilling holes in the gravel with the ferule of his disjointed umbrella. There was a circle of water-beads round the rim of his hat; his thick-soled boots had not proved impervious to water; he was conscious of being very wet at the knees and elbows and other angles of the human frame; but, nevertheless, he had forgotten the rain in his amazement. He had not thought of Robert bringing friends with him from London—had not anticipated his brother making high holiday in the house which he had built for the bride that would never be his.

“Perhaps I had better turn back,” he mused. Then a wish to see Robert, allied to a little curiosity as to what Robert’s friends were like, carried him slowly and thoughtfully up the steps.

He knocked at the entrance door, and the summons was immediately responded to by a servant in livery, a new servant from London, whom he had not seen before, and who, consequently, did not know him, and stared hard at the damp, weather-beaten visitor.

He was a London servant, accustomed to answer doors, and find thereat seedy individuals with blue bags containing specimen numbers of illustrated works to be taken in in monthly parts, and, if he were not too quick for them, to be left till called for ; thereby entailing further trouble in looking for the articles and answering the door again. He had had a long experience of begging-letter impostors, who wished to see Mr. — particularly, and with poor relatives, and other fry of that sort. He had come down that afternoon with his master and friends, bearing a good character from his last place. He was a stranger to Chipnam, and knew nothing of its manners and customs. He saw before him a tall, wet individual, with an umbrella that was dislocated in a disgusting manner, and he drew his own conclusions.

“ Mr. Bayford is within, I think.”

“ No. He’s out.”

“ Out ! Where has he gone, then ?”

“ Can’t say—left no message.”

Mr. James Bayford looked very intently into the stolid countenance of the speaker, who, having filled up the gap in the doorway with his

own admirable proportions, was keeping the minister still under the portico.

"I'll wait till he returns, then," said he, after a moment's deliberation.

"Oh! you can't do that. We don't want anything, you know; and if it's anything about orders, you must go round to the side gate."

"I heard Mr. Bayford's voice a moment since, I think."

"Well, he's busy—there! He's got company, and can't be bothered, that's the long and short of it. You must come to-morrow, if—hollo! you mustn't come any of this, you know!"

The Reverend James Bayford had put forth his strong arm, and steadily but forcibly compelled the mendacious lacquey to back into the hall, whither he had followed him. The wind saved any further trouble, by shutting the door of its own accord, with a bang that shook the whole house.

"What did you tell me a lie for, man? What necessity was there for that?"

"What did you—oh! my Gosh! look what you've done to my shirt!"

The man flung up his arms in horror, and looked down at his frilled chest, on which was the imprint of a black hand, a neatly-executed copy of the wet kid glove of the dissenting minister.

“What did you tell me a lie for?” sternly repeated Mr. Bayford, taking no heed of the man’s consternation; “you are not paid to lie here, and have, I am sure, received no orders to do so in this house. Good heavens! man, do you know that you peril your soul with every falsehood that escapes you. Sit down, and tell me the motive which led you to attempt deliberately to deceive me about my brother; sit down, man.”

The footman looked from his “company shirt” to the speaker in an affrighted manner; from the speaker to the hall chair at which Mr. Bayford was pointing; from the hall chair to the hall in search of somebody who could rescue him from the horrid dilemma into which he had thrust himself. His master’s brother, wet to the skin, with the knot of a damp white neckcloth blown under his ear—a horrid muscular being, who shoved people in

the chest, and left his mark there—what did it all mean?

There was help at hand. A man with white hair came from the dining-room to reprove his subordinate for slamming the door, and a second footman known to the minister made his appearance in the hall.

“Mr. Bayford,” they both exclaimed.

“My brother is at home,” said the minister fiercely—“this man tells me that he is not.”

“Ye-es, sir—to be sure, sir. Shall I ——”

“I can announce myself.”

But before James Bayford could fulfil his intention, the butler stepped quickly back into the room, and closed the door. The minister followed, found some little difficulty in opening the door—just as if there had been a strong grip on the other side of the handle—felt the difficulty suddenly give way, and allow access to the dining-room, to his brother and his guests.

It was a room brilliantly lighted into which the dissenter intruded, and at the table in the centre of the room sat some five or six gentlemen, and his brother Robert. At a side-table

near a pair of folding doors, which led into another room, and which were closed, were seated four card-players, each intent on his game, fighting hard for the stakes before them, and too absorbed to look up at the new-comer. On the centre-table were vases of flowers, a massive epergne, much silver-work, and an array of decanters and wine-glasses. There was an atmosphere of tobacco-smoke amidst it all, and to a man fresh from the damp air a sense of oppression and unhealthiness.

James Bayford took in all this at a glance; he was a keen observer at all times, and in this instance he was anxious to observe. He noted, too, the peculiar stare with which he was favoured by his brother's guests; men with moustaches and worn countenances, who had seen life, he felt assured—seen life after the fashion of their class, turning to the dark side of it ever, and thinking not for a moment of the great Life beyond the one they dashed their way through. Was Robert degenerating to this?—were these men of the world, worldly, to be preferred to the sister and brother he had loved so much? He prayed not, even

then, with his heart beating faster, and a feeling not wholly akin to indignation warming the blood in his veins.

“Well, James! Gentlemen — my brother.”

The gentlemen all moved their heads at the same moment,—as though some one had pulled a string behind which regulated their movements—and continued to stare at the damp stranger. James Bayford took no heed of the introduction, but looked straight at his brother, sitting at the head of the table, with his honest face flushed and disturbed.

“I should not have intruded on your party of—of friends, Robert,” he said, “had I been aware of it. I heard the news of your arrival, and hastened hither to make sure that you were well and happy.”

“Oh! I am always well,” said Robert, with a laugh; “had I been ill or despairing, I should have known where to send, Jemmy. But I knew this—this sort of thing,” with a general wave of his hand, “was not to your taste, and so I deferred the pleasure of greeting you till the morning.”

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There was an awkward pause—the minister not seeing the occasion for a reply. The gentleman left off staring—the well-bred majority of them directed their attention to the ceiling, and smoked their cigars placidly; the butler, standing at the sideboard whereon was the reserve-guard of decanters, grimly surveyed the strange scene; Robert Bayford fidgeted with a pair of silver nut-crackers.

“Take a seat, sir, and try your brother’s Chateau-Lafitte,” said at last a pale-faced young man, with a straw-coloured beard and moustache, “he has been sounding its praises unconscionably this evening.”

The gentleman might have intended this remark as a relief from the silence, or as a mild impertinence which the politeness of his delivery might cover. James Bayford simply said “No,” without looking towards the speaker.

“I must ask our host to use his influence to persuade his brother,” continued the gentleman; “I am assured we shall find the newcomer the very best of good company. I

consider gentlemen of his cloth the finest after-dinner talkers, the most——”

“That’ll do, Vaughan,” said Robert Bayford, rising; “spare your flow of pleasant banter for a while—it’s not agreeable just now. James, will you come with me?”

He turned to the folding doors, and James was advancing in his direction when he stopped suddenly—so suddenly, with such a blank expression on his face, that there pealed forth, more suddenly still, a burst of laughter from the guests.

Robert regarded Vaughan fiercely for a moment. “This is your foolery,” he muttered, at which there was another laugh as he turned away, passed his arm through his brother’s, and led him back into the hall.

“This is all very awkward, James. I might have foreseen this, and spared you. Forgive me, old boy, it was my thoughtlessness.”

“I have nothing to forgive, Robert,” said the other sadly. “I don’t know that I have any cause to feel so utterly cast-down as I do. But the change is great and unexpected; and

to find you surrounded by friends like this has taken me aback, that's all And, oh ! Bob—those friends ! ”

“ Don't look so scared. They are not wolves looking about them and seeking whom they may devour. They are gentlemen of position—two of them of rank.”

“ What do they come here for ? ”

“ Do you think I could bear this great house all to myself ? ” he said with a laugh.

“ I am sorry that it was ever built.”

“ Oh ! it don't matter much. One must live somewhere, and Chipnam is as fair a spot for a man to retire from business in as one could select. But, James, you are aggrieved ? ”

“ No.”

“ I tell you, you are,” and he laid a hand on each shoulder, and shook his brother's stalwart form ; “ and you don't know what a *slave* of circumstances I am. Half these men *have* forced themselves upon me. Next week, you know, is the race week.”

“ I know !—how should I know ? ”

“ Well, it is. And Chingley races are rising in the world, and drawing every year a greater

crowd of fashionables. There has been some heavy betting on the favourite this time."

"Have you been betting?"

"No."

It was frankly answered, and the deep brown eyes did not flinch from the searching look in his brother's.

"Bob," said the minister suddenly, "*we* mustn't give way!"

"Am I a likely man to do that?"

"There are many ways of facing a great disappointment—yours may be about the worst."

"A great disappointment!" laughed the other, "how dolefully we speak!"

"Two months ago you said——"

"Two months ago belong to the past, and are strewn with dead leaves," said Robert; "let the dead leaves cover the past, for both our sakes. All has happened for the best."

"You *will* try to think that?" was the doubtful murmur.

"To be sure."

James Bayford looked into his brother's

face again. After all, it was not much altered; still the frank handsome face he had ever known. There were a few lines across the forehead, and more hardness—he fancied so!—about the mouth, but he had not altered much. He could not tell, looking at that face, how he had borne the first shock of his disappointment; in some way or manner he had surely lived it down, and come forth stronger from the ordeal; but *had* it all happened for the best?

They were laughing uproariously in the room they had quitted—there was an excellent joke being circulated there—the whole house rang with it. Robert Bayford frowned and gave a quick stamp with his foot.

“They are all fools and madmen!” he muttered.

“A harsh judgment on the friends whom you have invited here,” said James, “and which judgment you don’t mean. My coming here has put you out, Robert.”

“No—no.”

“They are not the friends I would have chosen for you, Robert,” he said, “not the most

suitable for you, I fear. But I will not detain you from them."

"I shall see you to-morrow."

"That's well. Susan is anxiously expecting you."

Another shout of laughter, and the shrill falsetto coming in again this time, just as he had heard it outside in the garden. A sudden suspicion came like the stroke of a stiletto to the heart of the minister. He started and said in a harsh whisper, "Robert!" Robert was shaking him by the hand and bidding him "good-bye" rather hurriedly.

"I shall see you to-morrow, James—we shall have a long talk to-morrow and clear up this mystery. You need not be afraid of *me*. Good night."

The Reverend James Bayford was outside the door, and the door closed upon him the moment afterwards. He was bewildered, horrified—inclined to discredit, even then, the ghastly fact that had been suggested to him. Till the morn he would leave it—he was not a man to suspect too hastily.

In the wind and rain, swooping on him

more fiercely than ever, he went down the steps and along the carriage-drive. The umbrella turned inside out again at the first gust, and refusing to assume its original position again, was tossed a little angrily—Mr. Bayford could be angry—on to the lawn. Half-way out of the front garden, and then, coming to a dead stop, and looking back at the house with its one brilliantly-lighted window on the right-hand side of the portico.

Mr. Bayford paused, deliberated, and struggled with his curiosity. Suddenly, and impetuously, he turned and went back. Not up the steps this time, but across the lawn to the clump of laurustina growing beneath the dining-room window. He broke his way through the bushes, and reached up his arms. He was a tall man, and could just touch the great stone slab fenced by a gothic pattern of iron work that ran before the window. He clutched the stone with his hands and drew his chest up to a level with them—a muscular feat he and Robert had been particularly happy in at school. He could see into the room then; the guests smoking and lolling

about as he had seen them a little while ago ; Robert Bayford in his old place at the head of the table, half-way down two ladies in evening dress, one talking to the man whom he had heard addressed as Vaughan, the other laughing very shrilly and heartily, and mimicking something or some one, at which all laughed too, except the host, whose sense of enjoyment appeared not too evident just then. James Bayford dropped into the laurel bed, struck out for the lawn and the highroad.

“ God forgive me ! it was the act of a spy,” he cried, indignantly, as he strode on down the country road.

“ God help us all !” he cried a moment afterwards, with a half-groan, “ there’s danger abroad !”

CHAPTER V.

ENEMIES.

JAMES BAYFORD did not enter into any lengthy particulars to Susan concerning his interview with his brother. After surprising her on his return by saying, "I have been to Robert's," he asked for his chamber candlestick, and pleaded the excuse of his damp habiliments for an immediate adjournment to his room.

Susan looked very intently at him whilst he stood on the door-mat outside, his profound respect for the parlour carpet keeping him from intruding thereon that night. She could read every sign of distress on that face—she had not studied it all her life for nothing.

“James, you are not pleased at your interview with Robert?” she said, after a long pause.

“I am not pleased. I have but seen him for a few moments.”

“He is not ill?”

“Oh, no.”

“He is——”

“My dear Susan, he has promised to call here to-morrow,” he interrupted. “I should like you to see him, and judge for yourself. He is well, and in the best of spirits.”

Susan did not attempt to cross-question her brother. She saw that he was perplexed. Before the morning he would have thought of all this deeply, and known what was best. She could see that it was his wish to keep silent just then, and she did not intrude upon his thoughts too closely. Had the weather not been so severe, late as was the hour, she would have issued forth in search of Robert herself. Well for her that the wind and rain were rioting over Chipnam that night. Robert’s temper had been already tried ; the meeting with his brother had disturbed him ; he had drunk

more deeply since James's departure—well for her, we repeat, that she did not set forth to Saville House in search of him.

The Reverend James Bayford appeared not so particular concerning his damp habiliments after he had reached his room. He locked the door on himself, and sat down before the fireless grate to study the matter—to see if there were any bright spot ahead wherein his brother might stand as fearless and pure-hearted as he had known him all his life. He could see that the breaking of a long engagement had been a heavy blow to him ; he knew from the sanguine nature of his brother that it must be so ; but he had not looked forward to the strange results of that night. And, beyond that night, what was coming to Robert Bayford ? In his new life he had begun badly : and one proceeds downwards at an increased rate of progression—it is the first step that is only retarded by the *vis inertiae* of our moral being.

Late burned the light in the room of James Bayford. The old clock on the stairs struck three before the gleam from the upstairs win-

dow no longer thrust its line of light into the darkness of a night ever memorable to the earnest man who thought and prayed, and the man who was thought of and prayed for.

James Bayford waited at home all the next morning for his brother. He was anxious to see him, and deferred many tasks for that purpose. He was perplexed about the events of the preceding night, and vexed that his brother had withheld his confidence from him. And yet, if the worst had come, and Robert had grown reckless of himself and his good name, it was not to be expected that he would be the first to avow his moral decadence.

Robert Bayford came at three in the afternoon. He arrived on horseback, followed by a groom in livery, every button of which was stamped with the crest he had lately set up. The groom held the bridal of his master's horse, and cantered up and down the road whilst Robert conversed with his brother.

Susan Bayford looked out of the window at this evidence of her brother's exalted station.

She had simple ideas, and possessed a horror of extravagance. A few years ago, before her brother became popular, it had been an up-hill fight for her and James to keep house together.

"This is not like the old times, Robert," she said, after he had kissed her.

"It looks like launching forth into extravagance, Susan."

"Very like it."

"Don't be afraid, I am not at the end of my banker's account yet awhile."

"Money easily flies away from our grasp, Robert."

"Ah!—yes," said Robert wearily, "I wrote something of the kind in a copy-book at school. Jemmy, how close this room is!—let us make a dash for the fresh air."

The brothers went out to the lawn. Susan would have followed them, but met James's glance and hesitated.

"I never could face Susan," said Robert when they were together on the grass-plot; "her grave, white face was never particularly consolatory. She must make a poor comforter to your distressed dissenting folk."

"The best of comforters. You speak harshly, Robert."

"She's the best of prim bodies. God forgive me, Jemmy, if I implied anything else," said he; "but she's odd and unsympathetic, and I never *did* understand her very well."

"I have to tell you something important concerning her and her future, Robert, next time we meet."

"Next time!"

"This—if you will stay long enough with me."

"Is she going to be married?"

"I believe so. She is engaged."

"That's one step towards wedlock, at any rate."

He said it very easily—too easily—and James fancied that he winced as he walked on by his brother's side.

"Who's the happy man, Jemmy?" he said suddenly.

"We'll talk of him presently. Let me tell you all that is preying on my mind, Robert."

Robert Bayford drew his watch from his pocket, looked at it, and returned it to its place, in a restless, uneasy manner. His brother James passed an arm through his, and continued :

“ Bob, I played the spy last night. Will you forgive me ? ”

“ You played the spy!—get out with you ! ”

“ I was troubled about you ; the manner of your guests—your own embarrassment at my appearance—and when the front door was closed upon me, I hid myself amongst the laurels beneath the dining-room window.”

“ You—of all men ! ”

“ It was an impulse, and I could not resist it. You were in danger, and I had a strange yearning to discover where the real danger lay that assailed you. Bob, I found it ! ”

The man in danger turned and looked very steadily at his brother. He was touched by his brother's earnestness and love, but he could afford to smile a little at his fears.

“ I read your guess at the truth last night, Jemmy. I said I would explain it. I am here to explain.”

"Go on."

"A few months ago I went away to London. In London I met one or two friends whom I had known in India, and who introduced me to friends of theirs—a few of the fast order of creation. You, old fellow, know nothing of these fast men, their good and bad qualities; their wickedness, recklessness, and happy-go-lucky sort of existence. They follow only one Bible precept: they take no thought for the morrow."

"Don't sneer, Robert—go on."

"They were light-hearted fellows enough, and in their society I forgot now and then a strong man's hope that had been snatched from me. You understand? I need not dwell on that."

"No, Bob," and the minister's arm pressed his brother's closer to his side.

"Society is a cure for hypochondriacism, and I sought society and found the cure. Coming back to Chipnam—to Saville House—which it would not have done to resign like a maudlin lover who could not bear the sight of the place, I brought society down with me

—invited my friends, who took the liberty—some of them—of inviting theirs. And amongst their friends were a Sir Richard Vaughan and a Major Wansted.”

“ Well?”

“ I am going to shock you very much, Jemmy—you to whom the world is not wholly worldly and selfish. Saville House was known to be a bachelor’s establishment, and its owner a man not too particular—an easy fellow, who says nobody, Nay ! So Sir Richard Vaughan and his friend the major brought down—without my knowledge, and against my will, understand—two lady friends of theirs. Ladies who are attached to them, and have as much affection for them as most wives have for their husbands—who are true and faithful, and honest in their way—but still are not those men’s wives. There’s the story.”

“ A sad one !—a sad one !”

“ I don’t know that,” said Robert quickly ; “ I have thought of this matter much ; standing in a new light myself, I have regarded things differently, and seen less shadow in them.

All very wrong and inexcusable I grant, but still ——”

“But still to be wholly condemned, Robert,” cried James; “to be stripped of its false mask of extenuating circumstances, and left in all its loathsomeness, for honest men to turn away from.”

“No.”

“No!” echoed James.

“Not to be wholly condemned, but to be recommended to mercy, and, in many cases, to be pitied and pleaded for.”

“Do you pity your friends, and plead for *them*?”

“Vaughan’s a brute without a soul—and no friend of mine. But Wansted is an unfortunate man, and has been tried much. Shall I tell you his story?”

“No,” was the response; “I have no interest in the trials of a man who gives way. Not all the trials under heaven—sent from heaven for an All-Wise end—are an excuse for a man living in sin. Don’t set up a hero from a knave and a coward!”

Robert coloured, finally gave vent to a forced laugh.

"I am not partial to hero-worship. And as I should not be able to convince you of my friend's claim on human sympathy, subject deferred *sine die*."

He looked at his watch again and added,

"I am afraid I must be stirring again. After the races, Jemmy, we shall see more of each other, and it will be more like the old times here."

"The old times, Bob, are going further and further back. I did not think that they had gone so far away until this awful explanation."

"Have I horrified you so much?"

"You have alarmed me. You have confessed to opening your doors to the vilest of men—to allowing them to bring into your house creatures more dead to shame than themselves—to considering them your guests and calling them friends. Your explanation amounts but to this, Robert."

"I have had half these people thrust upon me; I can't tell them to leave my house, however unwelcome they may be; I can't set up

myself as one more squeamish than my neighbours. You don't understand the world, Jemmy—you are too good for such a world as mine."

"Thank God —— yes," was the strange answer.

Robert seemed disposed to beat a retreat, but his brother had not done with him yet. He saw the danger ahead, to which Robert was blind, or despised too much to take heed. Through the glass darkly, between that brother and his future, he saw the darker shadows flitting, and biding their unhallowed time. The arm that would have been withdrawn from him was held more firmly by his own.

"Bob, you will get rid of these people as quickly as you can—for your sake, for your soul's sake! It is so easy to drift away from right, and go down, down to that from which you would turn away with horror just now. You are unsettled, and may care not what you do—or think not till the fatal irrecoverable step is made which brands you as one of the fallen. For my sake, for the sake of the old dead mother we both

loved, for God's sake, brother—be warned.”

“Was I ever a man to be turned like a child?—have I not some of your old dogged inflexibility in my nature yet? Why do you fear for me?”

“You have been led, or you have entered of your own free will, into temptation—and oh! Robert,” wringing his hands, “you are not a man with courage to pray.”

“I have not the heart to pray, knowing how unworthy I am,” he said, moodily. “I put my trust in myself when I turned away from the old mother, Jemmy.”

“You lean on a broken reed.”

“I know it; but I shan't fall. Trust me, Jemmy, in this matter at least. I was never a weak man, and I shall ever be too proud a one to turn rascal.”

He disengaged his arm from his brother at the same moment as a party of ladies and gentlemen came rattling on horseback up the country road. Two ladies in riding habits, and seven or eight gentlemen, whose faces James Bayford had seen flushed with wine last night.

"Your *friends*!" said the minister, with a touch of bitterness in his voice.

"Butterfly friends of the hour, to vanish away and leave you less in distress about me," said Robert.

"Friends with the power to do much harm. Oh! Bob, you will take care?"

"Trust me."

"You will make haste and get rid of them? I would rather hear that you were going back to India for twenty years, than that they were going to stay twenty more days with you."

"You exaggerate my position. If you only knew what good, quiet fellows most of them are. Good-bye."

"Good-bye. God bless you—and protect you!"

Robert Bayford crossed the lawn rapidly, was through the gate and on his horse's back before the *cortège* was abreast of him. There were laughing and bantering from his guests as they curvetted and pranced about the roadway before there was a general movement. They dashed off at last, however, and James Bayford stood and watched them rattle

away down the road, until they were but faint specks in the distance, and the clatter of the horses' heels had become inaudible.

Long after they had gone he was watching still. His sister's hand suddenly touching his arm only aroused him.

"Are they Robert's friends?" she asked.

"No ; his enemies !"

CHAPTER VI.

CISSY DALY.

It is essential to the future progress of our tale that we join the gay cavalcade proceeding along the road that wound its way between the Chipnam hills. It is essential also to sketch in here two more characters, upon our already crowded canvas. They have their parts to play here—painful and disagreeable parts, which influence the after-lives of many of our characters, and we cannot escape them. The stream of life runs on towards the sea, and bears upon its surface those in whom we hope, of whom we fear. We cannot disentangle

them from those they come in contact with upon their hurrying journey; we can but follow them, and wonder what the end will be!

Robert Bayford had not been long with his friends before the younger of the two ladies was at his side—a bright-faced, golden-haired girl, who could scarcely be more than one-and-twenty years of age. Her horse had fallen in by the side of Bayford's very naturally and unintentionally, and it was only when a silvery laugh rang in his ears that Robert awoke from a reverie into which he had fallen.

"How grave we are to-day, Mr. Bayford!—has that solemn gentleman, who frightened us so yesterday, been preaching to you again?"

"Yes; and a very good sermon, the effect of which I have not shaken off yet."

"All about the evil of present company, and the dangers that were surely surrounding you."

"Spoken like a prophet, Miss Daly."

"These sermons are very dreadful things!" she cried, with a little shudder; "if we wish to live happy and keep the wolves from us—wolves of conscience—we must not listen

to sermons about the grim Afterwards. I left off thinking, Mr. Bayford, two years ago."

"An early age to give up."

"Yes; but it couldn't be helped—and I *was* very young then. Oh! you know all about it, sir."

"Yes."

"Vaughan has told you—he tells everybody *my* story," she said, with her red lip curling scornfully; "it's a feather in his cap, and he parades it very ostentatiously. Still, he's a good fellow; if I forgive him, God will forgive him, I know!"

There did not seem much to laugh at in this remark, but she laughed long and heartily—becoming very grave all at once, however, as she noted the grim look of the gentleman whom she had addressed.

"Don't you think so?"

"I don't know; let's hope so, at any rate. Why do you refer to me?"

"You are—you are so different to the rest of them," she said, with a strange, even a natural shyness; "not so fond of *making game*

of a girl whose love led her too far, and brought her to this. "Do you know," in a low tone, "I cannot exactly understand where you picked all this odd lot up."

Bayford laughed this time, and his companion caught the infection, and added his musical ringing notes to his own. Sir Richard Vaughan, riding in advance, looked back and twirled one of his long curly moustaches.

"You two are merry there," he said gaily. "what's the subject of discourse? Your humble servant?"

"Oh! we have something more sensible to talk about," was the lady's answer. . . . which there was a general shout of laughter and a "Bravo, Cissy!" from several of the gentlemen.

Presently Cissy was by Sir Richard Vaughan's side, glancing now and then very nervously, very anxiously, into his face.

"You're not jealous, dear, of *me*?" she asked, when perfectly certain that there were no listeners.

"Jealous, my girl! I am one of the easiest tempered fellows under the sun."

"I never tried to make you jealous in my life, did I?"

"Never."

"You told me once that you liked to see me gay, lively, and *insouciant*, and that my fits of moping gave you the horrors. I never mope now, Vaughan."

"Good girl!"

"'If you loved me as I love you,' she sang, —'you know the rest?'"

"I have heard something about it," he said indifferently; "you were always fond of poetry. How do you like Bayford?"

"I have been telling him that he is too good for us."

"What does he say?"

"He laughed, but I think that he is of the same opinion, Richard."

"He is a hearty fellow enough. These East Indians generally are. What a pot of money he must have made to have started such an establishment! Don't fall in love with him, Cissy, and let him cut me out."

"Cut *you* out!"

"These things do happen, and a rich and

wine came round. She was in excellent spirits after that time—laughed and chatted, and indulged in sparkling witticisms, which kept the company laughing too. Clever, vivacious, and even witty, she took the lead in conversation, and became excited by the applause showered upon her. It was she whom James Bayford had seen last night from his watch amongst the laurustina—the woman whom he had considered as the very personification of danger to his brother's house. Did the shadow of coming events fall upon him in the moments of that watch, for that idea to possess him in those early days?—the early days before the shadow deepened on them all!

To Robert Bayford's other guests, to Major Wansted and the second "lady friend," we need draw no particular attention here—a minute longer than necessary we care not to stay with them; they need no formal introduction. It is only as regards Robert Bayford, Vaughan and the girl who had trusted her young life to him, that we have thrust the reader, *nolens volens*, into society that may be considered questionable.

This girl had really loved Vaughan—was flattering herself that the attachment between them was to last all their lives, and not end after the cruel old fashion of such attachments in general—she had believed all this, in spite of her fears and jealous fancies. When she distrusted Vaughan most she strengthened herself with past remembrances of her one romance: she thought that tragedy her “romance,” poor girl!

During her visit to Saville House she had been quiet and well-bred enough; only in excited moments over the champagne inclined to be a trifle loquacious. Her sister in folly was a staid woman enough, and offered her no example of feminine levity. Robert Bayford had implied that there was a sad story connected with her position; but it is not our story, and we need not allude to it. She was not good company, and Vaughan was always teasing Cissy to say something lively and witty: it was the part the girl was expected to play at Saville House and elsewhere.

To a certain extent Cissy Daly had been struck with Robert Bayford—with his courtesy,

a handsome man is always a dangerous rival. I don't say there is a chance for you—that you are pretty enough, or even clever enough, for a man like him.”

“Why do you talk like this?” cried the girl, with a heightened colour; “speak out, if you mean anything, Vaughan.”

Vaughan looked for a moment inclined to speak out, hesitated, turned it off with a laugh, and “What a high-spirited little minx you are, Cissy!” So the cavalcade rattled along; these two, now at the head thereof, lapsed into thoughts of their own, and were not the best of company. Vaughan looked very grave and stern, and Cissy Daly's red lips were compressed, and her eyes not so full of light and life as half-an-hour ago, when she rode away from Saville House. Very gay and bright for awhile these butterfly-lives, with no thought beyond the present, but quickly swept away by the harsher elements which stronger hearts might withstand. In the sunshine, all life, and nothing to fear—in the shadow, but desperation and despair! And Cissy Daly fancied that there was a shadow

ahead—no bigger than her hand, but it was there. Two years ago, when Vaughan led her away from a mother's side, she had had fears of such a day. In that false position of life which had followed her ruin, she had been always nervous concerning it; even plagued Vaughan about it, who had called her foolish and sentimental, and told her that there was nothing to fear.

And she had gone on fearing more than ever—though she had never “moped,” and turned always her brightest face to the betrayer. She had forced herself to be gay, and when her spirits would not naturally revive, there was wine ready to hand—she had become a confirmed wine-drinker, had Cissy Daly; and after a few glasses of wine, who so witty, so vivacious, so *thoroughly happy* as she was?

This young girl, whom one could believe born for a different fate, was therefore far removed from thorough happiness, until luncheon at Saville House. She had had a suspicion strike at her like an arrow during that morning's ride; and it preyed upon her and rankled till the luncheon hour and the friendly

Robert Bayford might become fascinated with her ; Bayford was a single man and a rich man, and the graces of Cissy Daly might captivate him. He knew nothing of Bayford's character, and thought he might be a lady's man, with no objection to make an effort to "cut him out." Had his plans succeeded, he could have feigned jealousy, improvised a scene, and so rode away on the "high horse," exulting in the success of his manœuvre. But Bayford respected him and his charge—and fell not into the snare laid for him ; and, meanwhile, time was hurrying away, and he no nearer his freedom. He must change his tactics and adopt a bolder course—he would have preferred to retire like a gentleman ; but, if like a scoundrel, still he *must* retire. His old uncle, a Dean of the Established Church, had told him he was living in sin and going headlong to the devil ; it was time, he began to think, that he left off his evil courses. So, full of a new-born morality concerning the heinousness of his offences, Sir Richard Vaughan, a week before the races, sat down to his desk and wrote the biggest and blackest

lie that he had been the author of since he swore eternal constancy to Cissy Daly.

He was going abroad at once—he had been summoned abroad, in fact, to fill a post just offered him by Lord Woolhead, who had come into the ministry after Blockhead's defeat on the beer question. He had resolved to accept it; and as his uncle, the Dean, had discovered their unfortunate connection, and aroused him to the error of his ways, he thought it best to sever the ties that had bound them together, and go away without a scene. Cissy, his dear Cissy, would soon be resigned to the parting; there were men more worthy of her than he had ever been, and she would not fall in position; on the contrary, rise, if she played her cards well, and kept her eyes open. He recommended her going to Brighton or Ramsgate and setting up for a widow, or even trying if Bayford were entirely impregnable. It had struck him that Bayford was a man to be talked over—he left her to consider it. He offered her the best advice; he wished her every happiness here and hereafter; and then he rode away one early morning from Chip-

nam, leaving a note to Robert Bayford, apologizing for a sudden call from his hospitable mansion, and hoping to be able to return before the Chingley races came off. 'He should ever remember the genial hospitalities and the generous host of Saville House,' concluded this atrocious young liar and black-leg.

Robert Bayford had no suspicion of Vaughan's deceit, gave him credit for the truth in his letter, and the kind remarks with which he had wound up; condoled with Miss Daly on the loss of her protector, and assured her that if she desired to keep strictly to her room till Sir Richard's return, she might rely on being free from intrusion.

Miss Daly remained in her room for two days—the first day keeping the door locked on her grief, and strewing the carpet thereof with a host of letters and presents which had emanated from her *ci-devant* adorer. In her rage she had torn in half a note for a hundred pounds that he had enclosed in his last missive; but it was changed in due course at her milliner's, the halves having been neatly gummed to-

gether again in moments of cooler reflection. But she felt Sir Richard Vaughan's secession deeply and bitterly; it paled her cheeks, gave her black shadows beneath the eyes, and brought to her face a look of hardness and worldliness that had never been there before. She had been studying the world's lessons in her forced seclusion, had learned them by heart, and had found the grim moral therein. There had been some one to love once; now there was some one to dupe and make money from. In a world of deceivers she must be a woman of the world now, and earn her living, and let no fine feelings ever again get the mastery. So she set her teeth close, after shivering Vaughan's portrait with the butt-end of the poker; and went down into society again, to enact the new character she had resolved upon pursuing.

A new and a dangerous part to play—dangerous in the extreme to a man naturally unsuspecting and frank. By degrees she had resolved to pave the way to an outburst of confidence in Robert Bayford; to tell him her whole story: how she had been deceived

—cruelly and atrociously deceived, and how she was left upon the world without one to love, or a true heart to advise. By the time that confidence came she lived in hope that Robert Bayford would have become interested in her, and have taken pleasure in her society. She had been well educated, and was a woman possessed of no common powers of observation. Something had struck her that this Robert Bayford was a disappointed man; there was a look very strange and sad in his hazel eyes, and there was a restlessness in his manner at times, that assured her his mind was ill at ease. Disappointed and restless, filling his house with friends he cared not one jot for, but anxious to distract his thoughts from the one past fact that was shadowing him, surely there was power in her hands to ensnare this man? He was unsuspecting; he was a man whom she believed she could even love. She must play her cards well, for the stake was worth the study. If she missed him, what lay beyond in the murky perspective for *her*?

So the dangers thickened in the path of Robert Bayford, and the sunlight thereon grew

more faint with every day. With every day, —though good angels were not sleeping, and prayers for his soul softly went up to heaven every night. Let us turn to those who strove for his moral benefit, and speak of schemes more pleasant to dwell upon.

CHAPTER VII.

CHANGE.

THE engagement between Josiah Glade and Susan Bayford naturally drew together the ties of friendship between the latter and Dorcas. They had been friends for many years; in the future they were to be sisters. If Josiah Glade and his intended had their little "tiffs" at times not unfrequent—for Josiah was born to quarrel, and he quarrelled with, despite his natural goodness of disposition — Dorcas and Susan had never exchanged a harsh word in their lives.

Dorcas Glade was a girl anxious to see a smile on every one's face, was possibly elated

at the engagement between her brother and her pastor's sister. She was her brother's housekeeper *pro tem.*, and invariably accompanied him during his courting expeditions to the dissenter's house. It was a queer courtship, Josiah having no soft speeches to make, and Susan objecting to soft speeches even from him. Irritable and dogmatic as he was, Josiah was a little nervous about paying his lover's visits alone; he had attempted it once or twice, and had got arguing on matters theological or parochial, and nearly lost Susan Bayford for good and aye. Dorcas had a habit of making things comfortable somehow, a peculiar happy knack of turning the conversation from matters discursive and dangerous; and Josiah, though he lived on argument, scarcely cared to trust himself without her. Consequently it happened that Josiah and Dorcas spent three nights in the week at the cottage, and James Bayford and his sister were always glad to see them. Very quiet and prosy evenings were these—nothing remarkable happening therein, Susan and Dorcas sitting at one end of the table, Glade and the

minister at the other. The ladies found their own subject of conversation, and the gentlemen discussed till they became excited and the ladies interfered; but there was not the shadow of any love-making in the dissenter's house.

It was all understood, however; Glade and Susan were to be married in the spring, or early in the ensuing summer, and each of these four orderly people were happy in their quiet way.

Upon this quiet way, Robert Bayford intruded one evening. He had left his guests to their wine and tobacco-smoking, and driven, as it were, by impulse to a purer and better atmosphere, had made for the cottage of the brother whom he loved as deeply as ever. He might be changed, he might be drifting with the tide, but "old Jemmy" was not to be set further away from him. That night in particular, it had been a relief to leave his guests and stride along down the dark road to the welcome light in the cottage window. He had hoped to find his brother and sister alone; still the Glades were not much in his way, and

he did not intend a long stay. Just a glance within there, to make sure that they had not forgotten him.

"I thought I'd look in by way of a change," he said, in reply to his brother's amazed look. "It's rather tedious that incessant talk about horses. Besides, I wished to prove to you that I was not forgetting you both."

He bowed to the Glades, brother and sister, and then sat down, looking very white and weary.

"Are you not well, Robert?" asked his sister, suddenly.

"I am never ill, girl," he replied ; "but my guests keep late hours, and I am not used to them yet. Upon my honour," with a hearty burst, "I shall be glad when they are gone !"

"It's worth twenty pounds to hear you say that," said his brother.

"I should like to try how the house felt in all its natural dismalness," he continued ; "merely for the change, you understand."

"I don't like to hear a man constantly

talking of change," Glade said, with his usual spasmodic abruptness.

Robert had never admired Mr. Glade. He stared somewhat haughtily at the gentleman who had thus unceremoniously dashed into the conversation.

"Sorry for your objections, sir," he said, coolly; "though you cannot expect them naturally to affect me much. I have been told by a learned authority that change is good for a man. There is no object gained in seeking counsel from wisdom's lips, if one turn a deaf ear to that which is proffered."

"No, but——"

"Robert, I have a word or two to say to you, now that the chance presents itself."

Robert followed his brother from the room to the library. It was dark when they entered, but James lighted a small oil-lamp that stood ever handy on his library table.

"Sit down, Robert. Don't look so anxious to hurry away again."

"I was looking anxiously at these preparations for a conference," replied his brother.

"Is there a serious debate to ensue?"

"I hope not."

"Not another lecture on the error of my ways?"

"Not to-night at least."

"Then I'll sit down," he said with a laugh.

When James had taken a chair near his brother, he said,

"I had intended to relate the news in full to you at our last meeting; but the interview was cut short. I told you then, that our sister Susan was engaged to be married."

"Yes; it was droll news."

"Why droll news?"

"I never fancied Susan entering the holy state of matrimony—thought, perhaps, that she was too grave, quiet, and methodical, ever to take the fancy of a wife-hunting swain. Well, who is the happy man?"

"Mr. Glade."

Robert whistled long and plaintively.

"That's more droll news still," he said. "Whatever did our sister see in that conceited and irritable being, I wonder?"

"She saw an honest, well-meaning Christian, Robert—a man deeply attached to her.

Were you as well acquainted with him as myself, you would esteem him more."

"Possibly; but I am not—I never shall be. Understand me, I offer no opposition to the marriage. Susan is old enough and steady enough to know what is best for her. I will wish her every happiness with Mr. Glade—all this is no business of mine."

"I have drawn you aside to tell you this, lest Mr. Glade should have thought it necessary to inform you in his own impetuous manner."

"Thank you. I prefer the surprise coming from you. When does the match come off?"

"Six or nine months hence."

"In six or nine months, then, it will be time enough to talk of what is to become of you, Jemmy."

"Surely it will. Shall we return?"

"You have nothing more to tell me?"

"Not now; and you, I suppose, have no news?"

"Chipnam is not a place for news."

James Bayford had hoped to hear his bro-

ther confess that he was heartily tired of fashionable society, and would be glad to get back to the old cottage. But Robert was not in the mood for such a confession. He was sufficiently restless and ill at ease to fly the gay company. But was it distaste of the guests, or a fear of giving way to temptation?

They re-entered the parlour; and Robert Bayford went at once towards his sister, and kissed her.

“James has been telling me all the news,” he said; “let me wish every happiness to the intended match. Mr. Glade, let me congratulate *you*.”

There was a lurking irony in the remark; he congratulated one, and wished happiness to the other. Possibly it was not intended, however, and the natural frankness of his manner took away all suspicion. He seemed in no hurry to depart after his return, but sat down with the humble party, and took his share in the general conversation, appearing once or twice to be using his best or his worst efforts to start an argument in which Mr. Glade might distinguish himself. But Mr.

Glade was not in an argumentative mood, or rather not inclined to argue with Robert. He was perfectly aware that he seldom got into an argument without losing his temper, and he did not care to fly into a passion that evening.

Robert remained about an hour with them, and then took a hasty departure, as if the sense of the impropriety of his escape from Saville House had suddenly suggested itself. But the following evening, to the surprise of all of them, he made his re-appearance.

"They did not miss me last evening," he said, almost as an apology for his second visit; "I found them muddled with wine, befogged by tobacco smoke, and quite oblivious to my departure. So I have come again to see how affairs are progressing here."

Although he seemed to prefer his brother James's company, Susan Bayford was suddenly seized with the odd suspicion that he had been struck with Dorcas Glade's good looks and good temper, and was inclined to fall in love with her. Her heart leaped at the thought. What a happy chance for him and her friend!—what a good wife she would

make that brother of hers, who had become lately so strange and unsettled ! Robert offered his own excuses for coming, but she took no heed of that. Afterwards, long afterwards, she remembered those words too well.

“Now I am welcome here, it is pleasant to see you all. I strode over from my big house in search of you. I have the chance now—weeks or months hence, who knows what may keep me away ? ”

“Weeks hence, when all the company at Saville House have migrated Londonwards, you will be more anxious to come here than ever,” said James.

“What makes you think so ? ”

“Cannot I read you like a book ? Don’t I know you by this time, Robert ? ”

“It’s doubtful, I fancy.”

He addressed himself to Dorcas Glade the instant afterwards, and seemed anxious to get rid of his brother. Josiah Glade had not appeared that evening ; business, to which he sacrificed all his pleasures, had hindered his visit to the cottage. Dorcas Glade proposed leaving early for home.

The Reverend James Bayford had fixed his brother on the Chingley Races question by that time ; hoped he was not going with his friends, or, if determined to go, that he would take care of himself, and not be led into drinking or gambling,—spoke in much such a manner as a nervous father might speak to his son. He was even beginning to preach in an under tone, when Robert arose at the same time as Miss Glade.

“I am going your way, if you will allow me, Miss Glade.”

Dorcas looked embarrassed at the sudden offer of his company, but saw no delicate way of declining it. Susan’s heart leaped again as they went out of the house together.

“If it should come to that after all, James. Oh ! James, if it should only come to that.”

They were standing at the open door, watching Robert Bayford and Dorcas proceeding along the country road.

“Come to what ?” said the minister abruptly.

“If Robert should take a fancy to Dorcas now.”

"Robert is a rich man—a gentleman."

"Dorcas is fit for any station in life."

"Surely, surely ; but still, it is a silly idea of yours, Susan."

"Silly ? my dear."

"One of the most silly notions I have ever heard in my life."

And with this harsh criticism on his sister's observation, Mr. James Bayford left her rather unceremoniously for his study.

Meanwhile Robert Bayford and his escort went on together. He had offered Dorcas his arm, which she had somewhat timidly accepted. She knew that he was a rich man, and too much of a stranger for her to feel at her ease with him. She wondered at the offer of his escort, though she had not the faintest shadow of the suspicion that had beset Susan Bayford. It was not many minutes, however, before she guessed the reason for his presence by her side.

"Have you seen your friend, Miss Saville, lately ?" he asked, with a suddenness that was remarkable.

"Miss Saville?—oh ! no."

"She—she *is* your friend, I believe?"

"I can scarcely say that. Miss Saville has been always very kind and friendly in her manner towards me when business has taken me to her guardian's house."

"Some time ago, if I remember aright, she introduced me to you as her friend."

"She was surprised at your sudden arrival—embarrassed perhaps."

"Ah! I see."

He said it somewhat bitterly—he felt more bitterly the explanation. This young woman at his side was a dressmaker then, and Miss Saville had called her *her* friend, in order to make her presence there during their first interview almost compulsory. Amy had begun to deceive him at the very first moment of his return. Why did she not speak out at once, and end all that day? She had the heart, if not the will, then; and she let the opportunity go by. Fool! had he not been blind, he might have seen the truth—it had been all clear as noonday to everyone but him!

"May I ask if you have seen Miss Saville lately?" he repeated, after a long pause;

“you will pardon me putting this question to you,” he added; “but the friends we have left would perplex themselves with a hundred reasons for my asking.”

“I see her occasionally with Mr. Chark.”

“She is well, you say?”

Dorcas had said nothing of the kind, but she believed that Miss Saville was well. She was looking a little more pale and thin, she thought, that was all. Only yesterday, she had met Mr. Chark, and asked after Amy’s health; his reply was, that she was very well.

“I was her father’s friend, Miss Glade,” he said, by way of explanation for the questions he had put to her, “and I promised him that I would watch over his child’s welfare. At present, circumstances prevent me intruding upon her; but she had called *you* her friend, and I accompanied you to-night in the hope of eliciting from you some information respecting her. You know nothing more?”

“Nothing, sir.”

“In a day or two I may chance to meet Mr. Chark.”

He met Mr. Chark that night, after leaving

Dorcas Glade. Near his own mansion he came upon the worthy incumbent, accompanied by Amy Saville and Mr. Alland. Mr. Alland and Amy were arm-in-arm ; the three had evidently but a few moments since left the rector's villa, and were strolling leisurely towards the house on the hill.

Robert and Amy coloured ; turned pale and coloured again. Mr. Alland raised his hat in a rigid fashion which conveyed the impression that he had not forgotten his last interview with Robert Bayford ; and good old Mr. Chark seized both hands of Robert, and shook them heartily in his own.

"My dear sir, I am very glad to see you."

"Thank you."

He put a bold face on the state of affairs, and turned to Miss Saville. Meetings such as these were likely to occur every day whilst he remained in the neighbourhood, and he must show he bore no malice, and had courage enough to face her. He extended his hand to her.

"Miss Saville, I hope you are well."

"Quite well, thank you," she murmured.

Of the four who met that night, she was the one most discomfited. The hand on Mr. Alland's arm he saw was trembling, and the lip quivered in spite of her. It pleased him to see this evidence of her emotion, and he became more self-possessed in consequence. His was the stronger nature, and he should show that there was little to trouble him now!

"I have been paying my brother a visit, Mr. Chark," he said; "my large house, or the company therein, frightens him away from me."

"He is well, I trust?"

"Very well," returned Bayford, "his energy never fails him."

"No," said Mr. Chark drily. He gave even a comical glance towards Alland, which that gentleman did not return. It was evident that the energy of the minister of Vale Street had been lately misdirected, in the opinion of one or both of the gentlemen before him.

"I suppose," said Mr. Chark, in rather a confused manner, "you are too busy just now

to accompany us to the villa? I suppose," in a lower tone, that Alland and Amy Saville could not hear, "it is too much for us to expect?"

"Too great an effort at *sang-froid* for me to attempt at present Mr. Chark," said Robert.

"I don't see why"—mused the incumbent; "you are almost Amy's guardian—if you cannot be man and wife, there is no reason that you should not be friends. Keeping away altogether appears very strange to us and the world."

"Perhaps I will return soon; or perhaps you may hear that affairs have changed, and my company is scarcely worth seeking—I don't know—I can't say."

He spoke hurriedly—even in a wild manner. Mr. Chark, unable to dive to the depths of the speaker's thoughts, could not understand him. He saw that Robert was altered a great deal, and he was pained at the change. Mr. Bayford was in a hurry to be gone, however. He turned to Amy Saville, who had withdrawn herself a little apart with Mr. Alland when her guardian had adopted a confidential tone.

He addressed her very calmly, with a tinge, as it were, of his old gentle manner—but then he was always gentle when addressing her.

“I fear I am detaining you, Miss Saville. Our friend, Mr. Chark, has been kind enough to invite me to the villa this evening; I regret that other engagements prevent me accepting his offer. Some other time, if you will allow me?”

He shook hands with her and Mr. Chark, raised his hat to Alland and passed on. He was surprised to find, shortly afterwards, Mr. Alland at his side again.

“Excuse me, Mr. Bayford,” he said by way of apology for his presence there.

Robert Bayford felt his cheeks flush and his heart beating unpleasantly fast. This man’s presence there did not tend to conduce to his moral composure. Why did he take his place at his side, and look at him like that?

“I think there is a little explanation due from me to you,” he said, speaking very rapidly, as though he feared an interruption on Bayford’s part; “since our last meeting, I have reflected on the matter very deeply.”

"If I do not seek that explanation, Mr. Alland," was the cold reply, "I do not see why it should be forced upon me."

"When we met last, you intimated that you might require that explanation from me—you spoke as though I had injured you, sir."

"Well—so you had."

It was a blunt reply, but it was characteristic of the speaker. Mr. Alland coloured, but he did not shrink from the fierce glances bestowed upon him then.

"Pardon me, if you harbour that thought, it is my right to require an explanation," said he; "your brother implied as much some months since; has, since that implication, not scrupled to attack me from his pulpit ——"

"You mistake, sir. If my brother has attacked you from his pulpit—I neither know nor care if it be true—he has valid grounds for the attack, and has not brought his family feelings into God's house."

"I may do him an injustice; but the attack followed so speedily on my interview with him, that it aroused my suspicions."

"We are each suspicious in our turn. Is this all you have to say to me?"

"On the contrary, I have not alluded to the subject yet. I wish to speak of your past engagement to Miss Saville."

"It is broken off, sir. You, as a man of feeling, should be aware that the subject is the most distasteful you could choose. Coming from you, of all men, particularly distasteful and objectionable."

"Of that which followed the disrapture of your engagement," said Alland, paying no heed to the uncomplimentary remarks bestowed upon him—"of the course adopted by myself, after mature deliberation on the matter."

Robert shrugged his shoulders. He affected to believe that it was of no consequence to him, but he felt a trifle curious notwithstanding. Mr. Alland was persistent too, and, unless he knocked him down, would have his way. Let him explain if it pleased him—he had no further opposition to offer.

"It is your belief, Mr. Bayford—it is the general belief—that I played a very designing part towards Miss Saville. That knowing of

her engagement to you, I allowed myself to entertain feelings, with regard to her, at variance with her position and my own. In a word, that I loved her and sought her to love me, when I knew that her word was solemnly pledged to be your wife, and that it was her father's wish before he died in India."

"I believe all this, and more than this."

"You believed that my love was not disguised from Miss Saville—that I sought to awaken in her heart an affection towards myself?"

"Yes."

"Mr. Bayford, you do me an injustice. By neither word nor look, during the whole period of your engagement, did I offer her attentions which she might construe into any evidence of an affection for her. I pledge you my sacred word to that."

"You did not love her?"

"I did not believe so until——"

"Ah! I see," said Bayford; "you blinded your eyes, and would not turn them on your inner self—you, whom I have heard preaching on self-examination and its necessity a dozen

times! You thought all was hidden from her, and then you betrayed your weakness, aroused her pity, finally her love for you, and her contempt for me. And this is your excuse, man!"

He strode on at a more rapid pace, as though he would outwalk the clergyman. Mr. Alland somehow found his explanation recoiling on himself, and he had hoped to clear up matters, and set himself right with this man—this man to whom he had taken from the first day of their meeting—this man he could have loved as a brother.

"You regard my explanation in a false light, sir," he hastened to add; "I did not intend to convey so illusive an idea to your mind."

"Possibly not."

"If you judge me so hastily now, how will you receive the remainder of my statement?"

"Keep it to yourself; I am prejudiced against you."

"I would outlive your prejudice."

"Impossible!"

"I hope not; pray hear me in calmness. Will you step into my villa a moment?"

They had reached the house of Mr. Alland. The clergyman's hand was on the gate.

"Never again to cross the threshold of your home, so help my God!"

Alland looked shocked at his companion's excitability. He was more shocked at his sudden turn to a frivolous demeanour, so utterly unworthy of the speaker.

"Besides, I have company at Saville House, reverend sir," he added; "jolly good fellows, who are waiting for the race day. I have my book to make up, and ladies to entertain."

"I will proceed a little further with you, Mr. Bayford."

"As you please, sir."

They went on again.

"I see that my presence is still objectionable," said Alland hurriedly; "the briefer I am, the more you will thank me. After your departure it struck me that Miss Saville was placed in a very painful position. You had broken off the engagement, left her free

to act, the town was prating of her and me—I proposed to her.”

“And was accepted. Amen to the story, sir, and good night.”

“And was refused.”

“Oh! sir, one swallow does not make a summer, and one young lady’s No is not sufficient to dash the hopes of a man of energy like yourself. You were too hasty, and Miss Saville, on the spur of the moment, might have thought the sudden acceptance of your reverend self too precipitate an act. You will be more successful in the second attempt—take the assurance of a man of the world.”

“I believe I shall, sir,” was the haughty answer; “I am still hopeful.”

Mr. Alland had intended to say more, but the last remarks of Mr. Bayford had touched his pride. He did not require encouragement to persevere from Amy Saville’s rejected suitor.

“You are, if I may use an old-fashioned phrase, paying your addresses to Miss Saville?”

“Scarcely that, sir,” was the hesitative

answer; "I have been waiting to see you, and——"

"And ask my consent, perhaps," was the bitter interrogatory.

"I was anxious for your opinion upon the matter," said Alland, after a pause; "I deemed it right to explain all to you—to consult you. Candidly, I look for no future happiness without Miss Saville's consent to be my wife; and I have been anxious, *very* anxious, to know if you had any objections to urge to the proposed engagement? Bitterly as you may speak of Miss Saville, I assure you, sir, she values you very highly still. Without your consent, I do not believe that she would accept me."

"What my consent has to do with the matter, puzzles me," said Bayford; "I do not believe Miss Saville would mock me by soliciting it, and I cannot think you need estimate it very highly. If it be worth anything, take it, sir, and become the happy man I thought I might be once myself."

"Mr. Bayford," said Alland earnestly, "you still feel this disappointment; it has

altered you very much for the worse. I hope you will not brood upon it. I feel that I have unintentionally helped to mar a future to which for many years you looked forward. Mr. Bayford, if I have been wrong,—if *I* have acted wrongly,—may I ask your forgiveness? There is not a man in the world whose friendship I covet like your own.”

Robert Bayford drew himself up to his full height, and there was a repellent look on his face that dashed down every chance of making friends with him. He had been wronged; and, intentionally or unintentionally, this man before him had helped to wreck his future. To his arts he had lost all that he had lived for, striven for, for years.

“Mr. Alland, you have acted like a man of the world; there is no forgiveness necessary. As for my *friendship*,” he appeared to tower above the listener as he spoke, “that is beyond my power to give, and beneath you to value. Times are altering, and I am altering with them. A man grievously disappointed at one and thirty years of age feels more acutely than a boy—occasionally becomes

more reckless. You and I will remain ever—it is better so—at arm's length. There is no man whose hatred I covet like your own ! ”

“ I do not understand.”

“ If you were a very bitter enemy, I should be more resigned to this. To steal my destined bride away, and talk of friendship, sounds very like an insult. Good night.”

“ But—— ”

Mr. Alland paused. A third figure appeared upon the scene—an elegantly-dressed, pretty-faced girl, with a light veil fluttering about the gipsy hat she wore.

“ Mr. Bayford, I have been wondering what has happened to you. Fearful that some one—perhaps myself—had given you offence.”

“ Oh! no, Miss Daly.”

“ Not offended with *me*, then? On your honour, sir!”

“ On my honour.”

He offered her his arm, and turned away with her towards the house, leaving the clergyman aghast at this sudden termination to the interview, and the manner of its termination. What did it mean? and who was that

handsome young woman who came to meet him so affectionately, and went back with him to the princely mansion he had erected amongst the Chipnam hills?

He had spoken of his friends—"jolly good fellows"—and of the ladies he had to entertain. And there was something in the manner of that lady which had startled Mr. Alland.

"Times are altering, and he was altering with them," he had exclaimed a moment since.

"God help him!" muttered the rector. "This is a change I did not expect. Am I to blame? God forgive me, if I am!"

CHAPTER VIII.

INTO TEMPTATION.

CHINGLEY Races began under favourable auspices. Chingley Races was held in the rainy season ; and ten or twenty thousand persons were seldom lured to the race-course without being swamped for their pains before the day was over. On this occasion, however, the sun shone all the day long ; the roads were dusty with drought ; along the whole range of hill-tops between Chipnam and Chingley there hung not one cloud foreboding future dampness. The roads that branched from the numerous country towns were alive with pleasure-seekers early in the day ; even Chipnam gave signs of

dissipation on the part of many of its townsfolk, and in defiance of the high-pressure sermons against horse-races in general delivered from two pulpits out of three last Sunday evening.

The market people and the inhabitants of the few courts behind High Street started at an early hour ; a few rebellious church folk rode away in their carts and chaises ; and one dissenting grocer, who was afraid of meeting the eye of the Reverend James Bayford, left before daylight with his wife and daughter, and drove for his life out of the town.

Robert Bayford and his friends set forth at eleven in the day. There were two carriages engaged, and three saddle-horses for the gentlemen who preferred riding to Chingley on horseback.

Robert Bayford and his friend Wansted were in the first carriage—their *vis-à-vis* being Mrs. Wansted that should have been, the mysterious heroine of a sad story that nobody is going to hear, and Miss Daly. Both ladies, it may be remarked, were not in the best of spirits. The morganatic Mrs. Wansted was

ever a taciturn woman, and Cissy Daly appeared struggling with thoughts of a lugubrious turn, and which would rise in spite of her.

Her companions attributed it to the continued absence of Vaughan, who they assured her would infallibly turn up on the course; but Miss Daly knew more about Vaughan than they did, and it was not any thoughts concerning him that kept her in bad spirits. The plain truth was, that Robert Bayford had given but very little outward and visible signs of being impressed by her. He was a grave, hard man in his way, and insensible to female beauty. He treated her with too much respect; had she been Sir Richard Vaughan's wife, awaiting that gentleman's return, he could not have behaved to her with more studied deference. And the hours were speeding on so rapidly, and the downward path was so very plain before her—if she missed him after all! She had tried the vivacious, and the sparkling, and the prettily capricious, to no effect with this impregnable host—to-day was all before her, and she would essay the senti-



mental. Her heart was in the conquest she was attempting—Robert's unimpressionability had piqued her vanity somewhat ; but the honest manliness of his nature had touched the little heart which an adverse fate had left her. There were times even when she felt how immeasurably unworthy she was of his thoughts, and how much better for her to steal out of the house and escape—leaving one good man free from the sin that would drag him to her level. She felt that she admired the man ;—she was a romantic girl, we have already implied—and that she should love him very deeply and passionately if she remained much longer there, seeing him every day ; she was even chivalric enough to feel disposed to resign him. It was a spasmodic thought, and went dead against her inclination and her choice of a home, so she smothered it before it grew upon her. Pardon me, ye who read this, for endeavouring to give you the terrible analysis of the mind of one whose life was a disgrace ; the story of Robert Bayford compels me to this dark side of human character, and there is no escaping it. If I touched too

lightly on the feelings brought to bear against Robert's well-being, you would consider him in the future more weak than he really was ; you would forget that he was a disappointed and an unsettled man, and not estimate rightly the danger to which a young, attractive, and designing woman could expose him. Here was a man without much care for the future, who required excitement as a means to live down the sting of a disappointment 'that had fallen all the more heavily for being unprepared against—all the more heavily for the long years in which he had fostered one hope ; and here was a woman inclined to love him after a fashion, and bent upon winning him to herself, if it were possible.

Robert Bayford was more grave than ordinary that day, despite his journey to the races, and his white hat with a blue veil appended thereto. Yesterday's conversation with Alland had troubled him more than he cared to confess ; he felt more disposed to take a bilious view of things, now the rector of Chipnam had confessed that he was paying addresses to his lost love. Everything was

very flat and unprofitable; he craved after an excitement that should dissipate the thoughts which were besetting him. He betted on the favourite, and against the favourite too, when the carriage was drawn up beside the race-course; he roused himself to an interest in the great event of the day; he drank more champagne than was good for him, and he mixed that with French cognac, which was very bad for him, indeed.

Whilst the race was being run for, his own brother would not have recognized that flushed man in the white hat, who stood on the cushions of his carriage, and shouted in his excitement—his own brother would have grieved to see him then.

There was dinner, then more champagne after the race of the day had been run; Bayford by that time had recovered all his spirits, adding thereto many illegitimate appendages, which he considered “spirits” at the time, and which conduced to the headache he felt on the following morning.

The dinner over, the company left the servants in charge of the carriage and horses,

and strayed about the course, to see life under varied aspects; somehow, he could not account for it, Cissy Daly was hanging upon his arm, and talking of Vaughan.

. They had moved away from the general body of sight-seers, and were straying on the outskirts of the course, amongst the furze bushes of the heath, empty caravans, and tents neglected by gipsies, who were busy telling fortunes in the crowd.

Miss Daly wished to ask his advice as a man of the world—desired to tell him the whole story of her wrongs, and of the misfortunes that were in store for her. That whole story came out then, she sobbing, weeping and trembling on his arm. Well, it was a cruel story enough, and, in the excitement of the moment, Cissy felt her wrongs acutely, related them graphically, and with a little—still a very little—melodramatic effect. And Robert Bayford, always roused at an act of wrong or oppression, felt his chest heave and his hands clench spasmodically. When he heard of the letter Vaughan had written to her, turning her off in so cool and business-

like a manner, he gave vent to one or two expressions which we need not set down here, but which fully demonstrated that Cissy's story had aroused his sympathy and his honest indignation.

"So I must leave you now," she concluded. "I have no excuse to return to your home. There is nothing before me but the streets and the dark river."

"Not so bad as that."

"If I had but one friend—oh! only one friend to love me for myself, or to treat me as his slave, and let me repay him by my eternal gratitude and constancy. Only one friend to save me from myself!"

She called it saving her from herself, poor fool! And Robert saw not the folly of it—felt that Vaughan's abandonment of her was vile, and that it left her free. Felt also that he was free too, and attracted towards her, unmindful of all the old pure past which he had shared with the brother who loved him, and who at that hour was even fearing for him.

He pressed her hand to his side, and murmured hoarsely,

“Stay with me!”

She looked into his face eagerly, passionately.

“My love’s not worth the having now. Still it’s yours, girl,” he muttered.

So the devil’s compact was sealed, and the devil gained the mastery of this storm-driven nature. We are glad to drop the curtain.

CHAPTER IX.

S U S A N A N D A M Y.

MRS. GLADE had a very unpleasant habit of thinking that she was going to die. A habit that kept herself and her family uneasy, and in which she generally indulged during plum season. Her ironical husband considered it was the plums, for which he had no foundation whatever, Mrs. Glade having no partiality for those comestibles ; Mrs. Glade considered it a grand break-up of the constitution, and commenced "putting her house in order" in a somewhat demonstrative manner.

Once a-year at least, it was certain that old

Mrs. Glade might have enjoyed better health, had less pain in her back, more command of her lower extremities, and even of her upper extremities, so far as they related to the organ of speech. Weak, querulous, and hard to please at that period in particular, the office of the *Chipnam Gazette* became no abode of love—was at times rather too breezy a habitation to be considered enjoyable.

One of Mrs. Glade's attacks had set in. The doctor had been called in, and given his assurance that there was nothing to be alarmed at; Dorcas and Josiah Glade had been sent for, received her blessing, been scolded for not making more haste, scolded for not expressing their regrets that she was no better the next morning, scolded for not believing she was going to die at all. Mrs. Glade did not take to her bed in any of these cases, but sat heaped in an arm-chair near the first-floor window, regarding the world with a jaundiced eye. Her liege lord and husband had summoned all his philosophy to bear the infliction, spent a great deal of his time in the sitting-

room, and did his best to amuse the old lady.

Mrs. Glade in these eccentric illnesses required a vast amount of spiritual consolation—very praiseworthy of her, and very proper if she had sought it at periods less likely to interfere with the study or the natural rest of those parties of whom she sought consolation. For the middle of the night was of no consideration to Mrs. Glade, if she had made up her mind for a minister. During these attacks, which fortunately seldom lasted in full intensity more than a fortnight, she oscillated between church and chapel with extraordinary rapidity, sending for Mr. Alland one day, for Mr. Bayford another, and occasionally varying proceedings by posting off special messengers to Mr. Chark's villa up the hill.

She was always anxious about points of doctrine ; wrapt in a terrible fog concerning a hard text which she had an idea applied to her particular case, or crushed to the earth with a morbidity concerning her past sins. This last subject generally brought Mr. Glade to the rescue ; he insisted that she had no sins to

speaking of; that if there were any blame attached to the Glades in the past he took the sole responsibility, she had no right to assume a share of it. Concerning it, and all that it had led to, she had no right to speak a word; he interdicted the mention of a syllable concerning it to the spiritual advisers who were coming up and down the stairs all day.

Her demeanour to her husband during these attacks was peculiar; she did not take offence so readily at his remarks, and in her periods of despondency accused herself of having been a bad wife, and far from a comfort to him in his declining years. Mr. Glade would, under these circumstances, attempt the part of consoler, until he put her out of temper—he took things so very easily.

“She had been a very good wife to him—the best of wives—there was no occasion to distress herself about the little differences that they had had in their time. She had never put him out in the least, or disturbed for one instant his equanimity. He knew her weakness and put up with it; he had never been affected by a single word that she had ever

said to him in her life. It was philosophy, and he had found it answer very well."

"You're a brute, Mr Glade!" would be the possible comment to this attempt at consolation. She went to sleep upon his brutality, and forgetting her past habit of a week or ten days' silent system, would wake up the best of friends with him; would be even sorry for her past assertion, and say very humbly,

"You'll bear with me a little while longer, Josiah?"

"For many years, my dear. We won't say anything about 'a little while.'"

Mrs. Glade had been ill for three or four days, when the thought struck her that Mr. Alland had not treated her well. She had sent for him only twice the preceding Saturday, when he was shut up in his study ruminating on his Sunday's sermons, and the second time he had sent his curate, a wretched young man with a lisp, to talk to her. And Mrs. Glade, looking upon a curate in much the same light as an apprentice, resented the indignity and told that gentleman that she would send again when she wanted *him*, and not to come

without being sent for, on any account whatever.

“It’s just like the church people, after all!” she grumbled; “I ought to have known better than to have *traped* away from the old chapel at my time of life.”

Mrs. Glade thought chapel consolations were comforting after that, and summoned Mr. Bayford three or four times a-day; and was only put out now and then by Mr. Bayford’s being absent on missions of importance, and unable to send a substitute. On these occasions a printer’s boy—under these circumstances it is scarcely proper to say “devil,”—was sent post-haste for a spiritual comforter amongst the Chipnam hills; and if her case were urgent, and she was afraid death would step in before her mind was at ease, two boys—not devils—were despatched, one in search of church comfort, the other of chapel ditto.

Consequently some unpleasant *contretemps* occurred—Mr. Alland now and then meeting Mr. James Bayford at the *Gazette* office; Susan Bayford coming suddenly upon Amy Saville in the same residence.



Concerning that last interview we have something to say. It is for that reason that we have alluded to the idiosyncrasies of Mrs. Glade in this chapter. Mrs. Glade had early that Tuesday morning sent for Mr. Bayford, who had, however, been compelled to go several miles across the Downs—and, disappointed in the dissenting minister, she had begged Mr. Chark to come and see her.

Mr. Chark was less capable of a long walk in the sun that morning than he had been for many weeks, and Amy Saville, seeing his weakness, had proposed to act as his substitute. Amy was constant in her attendance on those poor and ailing of Chipnam town who were accustomed to attend St. Martin's or St. Edward's, and volunteered in this instance to visit a lady whose religious opinions were far from being fixed.

"I have no doubt you'll do as well as myself, Amy," said the invalid incumbent; "you will find that the old lady does not require any special need for my services—only a little fidgety about some verse she has found in Revelations. If there should be any occa-

sion for me, you know, Amy," said he—a chance of being of real service brightening up his amiable face—"pray send at once, my dear."

So Amy Saville went down the hill, and through the Chipnam town to the residence of Mrs. Glade, where she found Susan Bayford had arrived before her. The latter lady had come as a substitute for her brother; she understood Mrs. Glade's peculiarities, and was often of service to her. Besides, she was to be the future wife of her son, and was welcome as a friend, although Mrs. Glade had no faith in the spiritual consolation of any one who had not been "regularly brought up to the business," as she termed it.

"You're very kind to come, Miss Bayford," she had said, a few minutes before Amy Saville's arrival, "and I'm always very glad to see you, of course. But until your brother comes, nothing can be done for me—not a scrap of consolation can be given. Josiah tried this morning for half an hour to make it all clear to me, and pulled his hair because I wouldn't see it—he called it *wouldn't*,

understand ; but he's not *like* a minister, my dear."

"What is it that troubles you?" asked Susan.

"It's something too deep for you, Miss Bayford," said she, mysteriously ; "I won't trouble you with it. I'll wait for your brother's return. Please send him up as quickly as you can, lest Mr. Chark—I haven't much faith in *him*, mind—should make a mess of his explanation. A very good man, no doubt, but no depth in him."

"Have you sent for Mr. Chark?"

"Twenty minutes ago ; but he's such a long time crawling down that tiresome hill of his. I shouldn't be surprised if he didn't come at all. I'm nobody. What's my peace of mind to a churchman?"

"I don't think it's right to speak like that," said Miss Bayford, with a little of that old primness which had been more evident before the heart-softening process of an engagement had occurred.

"Well, you're right, my dear," affirmed Mrs. Glade ; "but pain makes me discon-

tented. When one is ailing, one is not always charitable, you know."

"Shall I read to you, Mrs. Glade?"

"Presently, I think," said the old lady; "not just now. Suppose we talk about Josiah. A dear lad, but a little too positive. I hope I wasn't too cross with him this morning, but he put me out by considering himself so much in the right. One can't be always in the right, Miss Bayford?"

"No."

"How do you think his temper gets on now? It ought to improve—he has not much to complain about."

"Oh! he's only half as irritable as he used to be."

"Then he's a dreadful temper still—only half gone!—dear, dear me!"

Josiah's mother and Josiah's intended found a subject pleasant to discuss; they talked of the future housekeeping, of the future home for Susan, and Mrs. Glade forgot her theological troubles, and gave signs of rapid amendment. They were talking of Josiah Glade still, when Mr. Glade ushered in Amy Saville.

“ Here’s Miss Saville, who has been good enough to come down from the heights with a message from Mr. Chark,” said he, “ and to be of assistance, if necessary.”

Miss Saville entered, and stood for a moment undecided whether to advance or withdraw, after becoming aware of Susan Bayford sitting by the side of the invalid. Susan Bayford rose, and with a slight inclination of the head, acknowledged the presence of the new comer.

These two young women had not seen each other since the disruption of the engagement between one of them and Robert Bayford. Mixing with the townsfolk so much, and visiting so often those in need of help, still of late days they had not crossed each other’s path. No poor church-goer had been ill or unfortunate at the same time, or in the same locality as a poor chapel-goer, and until that moment Susan Bayford had seen nothing of Amy Saville.

And outwardly cold and passive as was Susan Bayford on most occasions, yet she was a young woman of deep feeling, and one who

had thought much and deeply concerning Robert's great trouble. Long ago she had had the idea that Amy Saville was no fit wife for Robert, but had become resigned to the arrangement, and had striven to love Amy for Robert's sake. She had long ago also entertained a strong dislike to the style of worship carried on at St. Martin's, to the aping of cathedral forms and ceremonies, and of studying effect too much—pleasing the sight and the ear, instead of rousing the heart from its worldly apathy. She had not much love to bestow on one impressionable enough to be carried away by a fancy religion like *that*, thought this stanch dissenting maiden. Still, for Robert's sake, she had striven to win Amy's affection, to regard her as a sister. She had sought her out when Robert was in India, asked her to her brother's house, even visited her at her own. And a certain friendship at that time had arisen between them, which might have expanded into a wider and more heart-felt sympathy, had not some severe remarks on church and chapel practices occasionally clashed with their efforts. So Susan

was not the best of managers, and had had a visionary idea of making a convert of Amy ; spoke of Robert being even as decided a dissenter as his brother—he had been once—and of the duty of a wife to conform to his views and his wishes. All this naturally irritated Amy, disturbed the even tenor of her way, and led to slight sparring matches at times, which interrupted the harmony of proceedings, as sparring matches will.

A few weeks before Robert's first arrival in Chipnam, the two young ladies had almost quarrelled—hence Susan's frigid demeanour to her brother when it was our duty to first present her to our readers. She had become convinced then of the unfitness of the match, and had not made sufficient allowance for Amy's youth, impulsiveness, and high spirit. Somewhat narrow in her notions, her idea had been that, in marrying Robert, Amy was to marry the whole family, and endorse and entertain all the family opinions, having but a very little one of her own. This is a weakness mothers and sisters of destined bride-

grooms did occasionally exhibit to their future daughters and sisters-in-law about the twelfth or thirteenth centuries—of course it has been dying out ever since; and only old-fashioned beings like Susan Bayford ever think of such things now. Still, Susan Bayford and Amy Saville had been friends, as the phrase runs, and Amy Saville had been more than once inclined to love Susan. She could read the natural goodness of her heart beneath the "starchiness;" the honest indignation of anything mean or wrong, veiled by a sense of propriety and maiden decorum. In good time, after the marriage perhaps, she would have thoroughly understood her; but the times had never come to pass—the match was broken off, and each had drifted her way, one at least wondering what the other thought of her.

That one could guess that morning. She looked towards Susan Bayford, and the chill of her presence made the room into which she had been ushered like an ice-pit. The stiff inclination of the head, the thin, pursed lips, the coldness of the grey eyes, the sad expression of feature, told of the woman's re-

sentment at the wrong done to a Bayford. There was no mercy, pity, or consideration for extenuating circumstances, in the prim maiden standing there so inflexibly rigid.

Amy coloured, even trembled. She had not been well lately. Her strength had seemed to have grown less with her spirits. Her heart had become unaccountably heavy ; things of no moment even disturbed her at times. The whole world had a strange unsettled look with it, that made her restless, and seemed to add to her weakness. In old times she would have been more indignant than hurt at Susan Bayford's demeanour, more inclined to resent than explain. She could not account for it then, but she would have been very glad to have shaken hands with her and kissed her after the usual manner, for she was saddened at the dissenting maiden's exhibition of unfriendliness. Did they all think of her so badly, these Bayfords, now ? Had she acted wrongly and treacherously ? Had she not known her own mind till the last ?—or was it at the very last that she knew it least of all ?

Amy, with a flushed cheek, returned Susan

Bayford's bow; and then advanced to Mrs. Glade, to deliver her message from Mr. Chark—a message that put the old lady out, as all messages that went against the even tenor of her way invariably did.

“It's of no consequence; although I daresay Mr. Chark is not so bad as I am, by a great deal,” she said. “And although it's part of the business of the church to wait upon its sick members, I shall not trouble him ever again, Miss Saville—I shall go to chapel when I get better—if I ever do get better. The church thinks too much of itself, a great deal.”

“My guardian is really very weak this morning; but if——”

“It's of no consequence.”

“I thought I might be of a little service to you—that I might read to you for an hour or two, Mrs. Glade.”

“You are very kind, Miss Saville,” said the old lady, softening somewhat after the first shock of her disappointment; “it isn't the reading—I've a cart-load of people can read to me! I can read myself, for the matter of that. It's the expounding and explaining

that's so necessary. However, I'm a chapel-goer from this time forth. Tell Mr. Alland, or Mr. Chark, whenever you see him, Miss Saville, that I'll have no more to do with churches !"

"Don't excite yourself, my dear," said her husband, "and don't attempt to make a positive assertion. It's a very bad thing for you."

"He's going to taunt me—and excite me, Miss Bayford !"

"On the contrary, I'm going down-stairs."

Exit Mr. Glade to his printing-office.

"And I'm to be kept very free from excitement," muttered Mrs. Glade, "and to get as much sleep as I can. And so many people *do* keep calling, to be sure," added this ungrateful old lady.

Both Susan and Amy took the hint at once. Both, it is probable, were glad to escape, and to find Mrs. Glade rather anxious to be left to herself. They took their departure, Amy preceding Susan by some three or four minutes, and returning homeward with a stinging reminiscence of a bow more frigid than

the first. A reminiscence that took her suddenly and impetuously back to the door of the *Chipnam Gazette* office, where she waited the appearance of Miss Bayford.

She had not long to wait. A few moments afterwards Susan emerged into the street, looking very much surprised to find Amy Saville there.

"Susan—Miss Bayford," Amy said, immediately she appeared, "I shall take this opportunity of speaking to you—of asking you one or two questions."

"Asking *me*, Miss Saville?" said Susan, with emphasis.

"Yes, if you please—if you will allow me?"

"I would prefer not; I may be harsh in my replies," returned Susan. "I do not wish intentionally to pain you, but I fear that, if we discuss one topic in particular, I shall not be able to think of many gentle answers."

"Still we will discuss it—I am unhappy about it."

It was a frank confession, and startled Susan. She glanced quickly, even uneasily,

at her fair companion. There was an excited look on her face now, in lieu of the weary expression of a few minutes since; the handsome face was flushed and the red lips parted, as it were with suspense.

"Shall we go through the town, or across the fields?" she asked, less austere.

Susan Bayford's heart was soon impressed by another's distress. She plumed herself on her unimpressiveness, and so deceived herself as to her own natural softness. Besides, she was a woman, and curious to hear all that Miss Saville had to say.

"Across the fields," was the ready answer.

They turned down a narrow passage that cut through the town and led to a footpath across the meadow land, beyond a path that ended about half-way between the dissenter's cottage and the path leading up to Mr. Chark's villa; so handy for both by way of terminus. They were silent till the fields were reached.

"I have had no opportunity of seeing you before. I did not come—I did not like to come," was the frank confession, "anxious

though I wish to learn what you thought of me after all that had passed. To-day I see for the first time the impression that the past has left upon you, and how you regard me in consequence. I am sorry!"

"Why?" was the short query.

"Norry, though you never cared for me much, to have forfeited your good opinion. Norry that you look upon it all as an offence to you."

"Perhaps—perhaps I have not a right to consider it as an offence," said Susan Bayford, taken aback by this rapid charge at the rights of the case; "and," more hastily, "I am not offended, only pained. Pained to think that the engagement lasted for so long a time, and then was broken off so hastily. Pained to think how much better it would have been to have made up your mind years and years before."

"It would have been so much the better," she exclaimed. "I do not assert the contrary—pray do not spare me—I deserve the harshest verdict, for that cruelty of mine. I have destroyed a noble life by that supineness.

God forgive me all the unhappiness of which I have been the cause!"

"Amy—Miss—Miss Saville, I did not expect this."

"I was selfish to the last, and did not see the consequence of my folly—did not know that I was—I was fearful of my future with him. In India I loved him very much, child though I was—and I—I thought I was learning to love him more deeply still after he came back. But I was disturbed—it was all so unreal, and like a dream—I could not believe that I was going to be married. And then that last night together when he was so different, and his manner just then seemed to presage so much of future unhappiness for us both, that I thought—yes, I thought, after all, that it was so much better to part!"

"Well—perhaps it was, Miss Saville. There is no reason to excite yourself like this."

"Oh! but there is—oh! but there is!"

"Amy!"

Susan Bayford turned round and clutched the arm of the excited girl. A new suspicion

had seized her, and for a moment it took away her breath. Amy Saville scarcely seemed to heed her.

"I thought but of my youth, not of him. I was selfish through it all, Miss Bayford. I did not consider how his life—the best and bravest portion of it—had been concentrated in me, when I begged him to forget me. I did not think that I might be marring his whole life, until I learned yesterday—only yesterday—how he had altered."

"Altered?—how altered?"

"Don't you know—haven't you heard yet?"

"We have heard nothing to the discredit of my brother. He is a little too gay, I fear, nothing else."

"Gay!" cried Amy, scornfully.

"Please explain—please tell me what you mean?" said Susan, as excited as the other now.

"The company has left your brother's house, I know. But he has not left it, and only yesterday I heard such shameful scandal of him, or——such awful truth!"

"Have you misunderstood him so grossly

all your life as to think it anything worse than scandal?" said Susan, indignantly.

"I don't know—I can't say," returned Amy Saville, incoherently; "I did not believe it till he rode past me yesterday, with the—the lady who alone remains his guest at Saville House.

"God help us!" ejaculated the sister.

The truth flashed upon her then—she believed it then in her heart, despite her wish to throw discredit on it to Miss Saville.

"It is all my fault," murmured Amy; "it would have been all so different!"

"If it's true, he was never worthy of you," said the indignant sister; "if he takes a trouble like this by leaping down into sin, you are well rid of him, Miss Saville. But I can't—oh! I can't believe it!"

"I thought you might set my heart easy, and you know nothing," said Amy; "you are more in the dark than myself, and cannot tell me anything to save me from my own reproach. I am utterly wretched, and alone!"

She wrung her hands in her vehemence. Miss Bayford looked nervously towards her

again. Amy Saville that morning was beyond her comprehension—the depths beyond her sounding.

“I don’t understand you,” Susan simply confessed at last; “you are too excited, and do not tell me anything about yourself. Why do you tell all this to me, and seek me out like this?”

“I—I wish you to think me not wholly cold and heartless; that I was not aware of my desire to end the engagement until it drew so closely towards marriage—that I could not fathom my own thoughts, and make sure I did not love him. Pray think of me in this manner, that—that I did not know!”

“Miss Saville, had you sufficiently considered when you gave my brother up? Had you given up loving him—*are you sure?*”

Amy Saville turned paler still at this home-thrust, at the searching look in Susan’s eyes.

“I will have an answer—I must have it!” insisted Susan.

She could only interpret the actions of the excited girl in this manner—there was but

one solution to her strange demeanour. Her anxiety, her concern for the past, her bitter grief at the dark shadowing beyond, were only reconcilable with the fact, that, after all, she had not forgotten her first pledge to Robert Bayford. She had been tossed about in an adverse current, and had given up too soon.

“Don’t ask me, Miss Bayford. Forgive me all the harm I have done,” she said, “and think the best of me. Think of Robert too—tell James to think of him.”

She would not stay for further questioning. She darted away before Susan Bayford could stay her, and went back the way she had come—across the field and through the narrow turning leading to the town, where Susan missed her.

Susan watched her till she disappeared, then more bewildered than ever she resumed her way, her eyes inclined to fill with tears, her heart disposed to make strange plunges. At the end of the field a voice said,

“Susan.”

She looked up from the meadow-grass she

had been intently studying, and met her brother James face-to-face.

“Oh! James, I have been thinking of you so much!”

“What’s the matter?” was the quick answer.

“I have heard such dreadful news! They are whispering tales of Robert in the town,” she gasped.

“What do they say?”

In a few disjointed sentences Susan told him of the meeting with Amy Saville, and the scandal that she had heard concerning their brother.

James knit his brows, and struck the ground with his stick.

“What’s that old woman want with me?” he said, alluding somewhat disrespectfully to Mrs. Glade.

“Nothing very particular. I have seen her.”

“I’ll go on to Robert’s then.”

He had turned so pale, and looked so white and fierce, that Susan hoped he was not proceeding to Robert’s in too great haste, without

sufficient consideration as to what was best.

“Sin is ahead of us, and it is no time to pause,” he said.

“James, you believe this!” cried his sister.

“I have feared this,” he replied, “but I will not believe it yet awhile. Go home and wait for me, Susan. I shall not be long.”

Very firmly, very sternly, the Reverend James Bayford went on his way.

CHAPTER X.

ROBERT'S CHOICE.

"I HAVE feared this, but I will not believe it yet awhile."

They had been almost his last words to Susan Bayford, but he did believe it notwithstanding. The shadow of it lay before him on his road, darkened the look upon his face, cast its unutterable gloom between him and the well-being of one he dearly loved. He tried not to believe it, but all that he had heard was so direct a confirmation of his own fears, that he could not look the world fearlessly in the face and fling back the aspersion to the liars who had hissed it forth.

He had feared all this, prayed against all this, from the night he went in the wind and rain to Saville House, and saw his brother there. Noting the friends whom Robert had summoned round him, and the friends that had been forced upon him, he had had a stern foreknowledge of what the end would be.

He understood much of Robert's character—frank, and honest; clear-sighted, yet easily impressed. When a boy he had been headstrong and fond of his own way; he had been heedless, and, above all, he had never evinced a great amount of religious feeling. Such a man set apart from the business that had been his life, and cut adrift from his best thoughts, would, unsustained by religion, fall into temptation—if temptation at the time should suddenly present itself. Still, he would not believe it yet awhile! The reality was too grim, suggested such a terrible fall, and such an awful change! He strode along at a rapid pace, absorbed in the whirl of thought that beset him; he would not believe it, but he was engaged in an animated dialogue with Robert—in which Robert, of course, had the worst

of the argument, and acknowledged himself a sinner who had grievously offended. He would not believe it—and yet he prayed with his closed lips that this might be a passing trouble, and God would be merciful to the brother who had sinned.

He was before the stately mansion, and proceeding along the carriage-drive again. For the second time approaching that unlucky house—a house begun in hope and finished in despair; filled never with the bright presence of which its owner had dreamed, and worthy never of the name of home. Its very name upon the stones each side of the great gates was a mockery in which his brother's bitterness of spirit had rejoiced.

His summons at the door was responded to by the same lacquey who had been insolent to him on his first visit. Experience had rendered the man wise, however, and he was a pattern of obsequious humility.

“Is Mr. Bayford within?”

“No, sir—I—I assure you, he really isn't, sir, this time.”

And he stepped back suddenly, lest the

minister should once more make a grasp at his shirt with his black kids.

“Where is he?”

“Out riding, sir. He has ordered luncheon at one. Will you step in and wait?”

“Thank you, I will.”

James Bayford entered the hall, and the door closed. There were boxes in the hall packed and corded; the minister pointed to them with his stick.

“What does that mean?”

“Mr. Bayford’s going to London this afternoon, sir.”

“Indeed!”

“Will you step this way, sir?”

James Bayford followed the servant to a handsomely furnished room at the back of the house.

“Not this,” he said.

“Sir!”

“Not this. Some room with a window looking on the high road. I wish to see my brother arrive.”

“Very well, sir.”

“He is not alone?”

"No, sir."

Servant and visitor went back along the corridor to the hall again.

"Which room would you prefer, sir? Dining-room or——"

"Drawing-room," decided the dissenter.

Into the sumptuously furnished room on the left of the portico, a room that extended the whole depth of the house, having a bay window at each extremity, one opening on the flower-garden in the rear, one fronting the Chingley road and facing the Chipnām hills.

Mr. Bayford, who had carried his hat in his hand up to this time, placed it on the drawing-room table by way of contrast to the ornaments and gaily-bound books thereon, and commenced walking up and down the room after the door had closed. Occasionally he paused, and with his hands behind him, somewhat after his brother's habit, took his stand at the front window and looked forth. After a while he turned away and resumed his perambulations, critically inspecting the pictures on the walls, the Wedgewood on the mantel-piece, the satin damask of the furni-

ture. All around him was of a richness and a costliness new to this man of simple tastes—evidence of wealth, or of an extravagance of wealth, that made the observer somewhat sorrowful. James Bayford was a man who hated display; and the signs of it here would have affected him more, had he not had deeper thoughts to disturb him. Under other circumstances he might have calculated the value of the superfluities around him, and the good that the money expended in their purchase would have effected, if directed to another source; but there was a greater sin than extravagance in that house, and he had come to root it forth. There must be no half-measures now—no temporizing, no gentle inducements for Robert to reflect. His brother had fallen into temptation and was living in sin; and he was a man of God, whose duty it was to attack sin boldly, and spare not the fine feelings of his listeners. There was a stern task before him, and he must strike with all his force, remembering whose servant he was, and where his mission lay.

A clatter of horses' hoofs on the road beyond

brought him to the window again, but the riders passed by, and were not of his acquaintance. He turned away, went to the end of the room once more, paused, and suffered his attention to be distracted by a hat—a lady's low-crowned hat, with a white feather meandering round the rim—which had evidently fallen behind the couch near the window. He leaned over and picked up the obnoxious article, holding it at arm's length with an expression of horror on his countenance, that, under circumstances less stern, would have assumed a ridiculous hue. The Reverend James Bayford turned it in his hand, and examined it very ruefully—finally, in his excitement, crumpled it together in his iron grip, and tossed it contemptuously away again. "This is a sad affair," he murmured, as he recommenced his perambulations. There was a gilt time-piece on the mantel-shelf that startled him at this juncture by the sharp, quick "One" of its stroke. He had become strangely nervous waiting there, to feel startled by that summons. It was the hour fixed for Robert Bayford's return—in a minute

or two he should be face to face with him.

He took up his position for good at the window, and had not stood there long, immobile and statuesque, before Robert Bayford and his companion came prancing and whirling on their thorough-breds to the gate. He saw the gate swung open, and then the riders come cantering along the drive; his heart swelled within him, his colour faded away, his right hand twitched nervously at the white neck-cloth round his throat.

They seemed very happy and contented with their false position out there—recking not of the laws they had outraged, or of God's frown on the act. Careless sinners, who *would not* think, but strewed the dark places before them with flowers; who lived on hoping for eternal sunshine, and were dead to any sense of wrong. It is easy for a time, in the first flush of bewildering, intoxicating passion, to live down all thought—but the Afterwards, when the delirium is over, and the muttering of God's thunder begins to be heard!

Neither Robert Bayford nor the bright-faced girl at his side was conscious of the

stern sentinel at the drawing-room window; they came on, dismounted, entered the house. The watcher heard the door close behind them, then a silvery laugh echo in the hall, and then the handle of the door turn sharply. A lady in a riding dress was standing before him, staring at him in blank astonishment, finally colouring visibly beneath his stern, searching gaze towards her.

"You are—you are Mr. Bayford's brother?"

"Yes, madam."

"Shall I tell him——"

"Tell him that I am here on a matter of life and death."

"Oh! sir—what has happened?"

"Life and death to him. A life moral and pure as his should have been to the last, or a death unto sin and unrighteousness."

Cissy Daly looked aghast!—she had had no experience of earnest men who called things by their right names, and spared no one who was weaker than themselves. Men who had fought the battle of good against evil, and were scarred warriors, with no mercy on those who had given way in the *mêlée*.

“Robert!” she gasped, turning round and looking back into the hall, where Robert Bayford was hearing, just too late, the particulars of the visitor who had intruded upon him. An instant afterwards, Robert Bayford had passed her, and was in the drawing-room facing his brother. He guessed what was coming, knowing his brother’s character, and he put a bold, defiant front upon the charge that would be made against him. He had fallen, but he was too old to be schooled—on his own head the consequences of his rashness and weakness! He took those consequences to himself, but he did not care to be told what they were from his younger brother. He knew them well enough—it was all his own deliberate resolves!

“I was going to write to you, James, but you have forestalled me.”

“Tell that woman to go!”

Robert coloured at the imperious mandate, and his brow contracted a little. He looked towards Cissy, however, and with the same startled look she backed from the room, and closed the door upon the brothers. She went

no further than the outer side of the door, where she stood with her gloved hand on the door handle and her head inclined forwards, eagerly listening. She was no heroine—on the contrary, a woman of many weaknesses.

“It is all true then, Robert,” said the minister, sorrowfully, yet sternly.

“What is all true?”

“That you are living with this woman.”

“It is not a refined mode of putting the question, James—still it is true.”

“God help you!—God forgive you!”

Robert did not answer. He found the bold front he had resolved upon assuming hard to maintain with that face strangely agitated before him, with those earnest eyes at which he had never flinched till then, searching him through. He turned to the table, laid his hat by the side of his brother's, and slowly drew off his riding-gloves. If he could lose his temper somewhat, and be more blind to what was right and wrong in his vehemence, he could fight his way much better through this interview. He was vexed, annoyed and mortified, and the opportunity would present it-

self. His brother would lose his self-command, he hoped.

“How long has this been?”

“No matter!—say it is. What else, James?”

“What else! Why, the disgrace which we must share with you, and the sorrow which we must feel for one of us offending so terribly in the sight of God. Oh! Robert, I did hope that you would have met your troubles better, and that we should never have had to blush for you like this.”

“The disgrace is my own—you need not share it. The sorrow will be of your own making—there is nothing to grieve for, on my account. I am content.”

“So soon!”

“I have but myself to please. I am old enough to act for myself, and—you will excuse me—old enough to resent being preached at. I don’t think, James, that you and I need quarrel about this matter—the world is big enough for me and my faults, for you and your virtues.”

“I did not think that you would receive me with a sneer, Robert.”

Robert coloured again.

“ Well — you mustn’t preach, Jemmy. There is a time for preaching, and a time for leaving it alone. The latter period is particularly appropriate just now.”

“ You are wrong. Now the sin is new to you, and not branded on your soul, it is the time to preach—my place to attempt it. We are children of one mother—do you think I can stand calmly here and let the brother I love go smilingly over the precipice? Man, you must turn back; it is not in your nature—I will not believe that it is—to go on conscious of the enormity of your offence, and yet defiant of God’s laws and justice. Robert, you shall turn !”

“ In good time. Leave me to myself a little while.”

“ I dare not leave you, till you promise to give up this sin—till you set aside that woman who has tempted you—that poor misguided, erring wretch, who is sinking down with you to hell !”

The woman listening outside shrank at the fierce denunciation levelled at her; put her



hands to her upheaved bosom, as though an arrow had struck her there. Still she listened, as though spell-bound.

“This is plain speaking, James ; red-hot dissenting bathos, which only irritates me, and can therefore do me no good. I like this poor misguided wretch ; I have offered her my home ; I have promised to protect her against a world of saints and sinners, all united in the holy object of running her down, and proving her worse than she is. She has been betrayed and ill-used, and I take pity on her. There is no power in the world to shake my determination whilst that woman’s true to me, I swear to God !”

He elevated his voice with his brother’s ; he brought his clenched fist down on the table at which he was standing.

James had turned more pale ; the sorrow, pity, affection had all vanished from his face ; he was stern and inflexible.

“This is madness!—the bravado that would take a sin to itself, and think it chivalry—the coward’s excuse, not the defence of a brave man !”

"Would you have me cast the girl to the streets?"

"I would have you act honestly, not like a knave. This is the first time I have felt myself ashamed of you."

"It will be the last," was the meaning answer.

"In one sense I wish it were, Robert," said James.

"I am going to London; from London I shall start immediately for the Continent. Possibly I may never return to England again."

"Easily put, considering the fatal news, Robert. You have altered strangely to talk of leaving me and Susan for ever like this, the only two who will love you, mourn for you, and pray for you."

"I say possibly. My future is undecided, and travelling for a man like me is a good restorative. You would not care for me to remain here?"

"With that wom——. God forbid!"

"Well, I choose between her and you. I do not defend my past actions, but I have

resolved to abide by them. Shall we part friends?"

"Why should we part otherwise?"

"I am a sinner. I have despised your Bible teaching. I have lost faith in God's word; I am going wrong!"

"All this but awakes in me my greater interest, my deeper love. Oh, Robert! for God's sake do not harden your heart against me, because I fear for your future, because through the glass darkly looms the awful estate which you will enter on defiantly. Do pause yet awhile, and pray for forgiveness; and think of the old times when you had greater faith."

"Too late!—too late!"

The hand that leaned upon the table pressed heavily until it cracked again; for the first time there rang forth, almost in spite of himself, that wail over the better times which he had abjured. James detected the change, the hidden mournfulness of his answer, and hastened to seize his advantage. But Robert was on his guard again, and had held up his hand.

“Spare me, Jemmy,” he said quickly; “we need say no more about this—we shall quarrel, if you will have no mercy on me in my own house. You are better than other men, —I will own that—but you must have pity on one, only up to the dead level of our poor humanity. You have gained a height unto which I have not the strength or courage to follow you. Let me think of you in the future as a good man who was merciful when my sin exposed me to his attacks. Let me think of you ever as the brother whom I loved, as the brother who was ever kind and good to me?”

“And how shall I think of you, Robert?”

“I am not worth thinking about—get me out of your thoughts as quickly as possible.”

“You know how easy a task that will be!”

“Then think of me as the big brother who took care of you, and fought for you when you were a boy; or as the man who came back from India with the same boy’s heart, until the shock came that changed it.”

“Don’t lay your crime to that poor disappointment; men have met with fifty greater

ones, and been stronger men and better Christians. If I thought *that* were your excuse——”

“I have no excuse. Good-bye, Jemmy.”

“You will come and see Susan?”

“No. I haven’t the courage.”

“But—but I cannot leave you like this; I dare not leave you like this!”

He was bracing his forces for a new attack; his mission was to assail evil, and here was evil gaining the mastery, and proving itself too strong for him. He was a minister, and he must speak out, and attempt to move the stubbornness at his brother’s heart. He had been warned, but it was not his place to take the warning. He was beginning to entreat his brother to repent again, when Robert rushed wildly to the door, and flung it open, disclosing the listener on the threshold, who gave a little scream at the suddenness of the act.

“I will have no more of this!” he shouted.

“I tell you I have chosen between her and you. Will you bid me good-bye, and let me go?”

The minister saw at last the futility of

preaching—the hopeless nature of the task before him. He must part and leave him thus—there was no other course for him to follow. He took his hat from the table, and then held his hand towards his brother.

“God bless you, and turn your heart to us once again, Bob! This is the bitterest day of my life.”

Robert’s right hand wrung that of the younger brother as in a vice; for an instant the left was passed over his features to hide the quivering of the lips that seized him then.

“God bless you, Jemmy!” he murmured in return.

Their hands parted, and James Bayford passed on to the door, whereat the woman, affrighted at all this, was still standing or crouching.

“Do you ever think?” he said to her suddenly.

“I—I hope so, sir.”

“Think of the wreck of a good man yonder, and that it is your work. In the future remember what you found him first, and pray God to forgive you!”

He went on to the hall, looked back a moment, opened the door, and passed out. The door closed, and he had left that house for ever. Cissy Daly gave one panther-like leap into the room he had quitted, and fastened both her hands on Robert Bayford's arm. Robert looked down stolidly at the carpet, and his face assumed no more brighter expression to find the saint replaced by the sinner—the reprover by the temptress.

“Well?” he said.

“Oh! that dreadful brother of yours!—that ——”

“Silence, if you please! His name is sacred with me; once for all, bear that in remembrance.”

“He has turned you against me—he has turned you against me!” she shrieked.

“No.”

“You are angry with me?”

“No.”

“Oh! Robert, don't think of all that he has said; I couldn't think of such cruel words and live. He's a minister, and *must* talk like this. My father was a minister too,” with a short

laugh; "but he didn't take half the care of me that your brother does of you. Oh! don't let him set you against me. I will be ever true, and honest, and faithful to you all my life! May I drop down dead whenever a false thought to you comes across me!"

"That will do—I will believe you, Cissy. You and I, in a wild sort of desperation, have taken each other for better for worse. If for the worse, why, what matters?"

What matters!

END OF THE THIRD BOOK.

BOOK IV.

CHURCH AND CHAPEL.



CHAPTER I

ALLAND'S SHADOW.

THREE months since Robert Bayford made his choice between good and evil, and left Saville House once more to his servants' keeping. The depth of winter now, with snow heaped upon the Chipnam hills, and Chipnam Force—as the little waterfall was called—frozen and still amongst the larches in the ravine. Church and Chapel in this turbulent little nest of townsfolk were more at daggers-drawn than ever—Mr. Alland preaching persistently against nonconformists and the narrow views of bigots; Mr. James Bayford finding more fault with church practices,

and not scrupling to denounce them from his Vale-street pulpit.

Men of decided opinions become more dogmatic as they grow older — more imbued with a sense of the fitness of their own peculiar views, and less tolerant of those of other men. And both these representatives of the two sections into which Chipnam was split were men who had these failings in an eminent degree, and studied not, after the failure of the lectures, to lessen them in any one particular. We have not set them before our readers as heroes—simply as earnest men, with faults that time did not seem likely to lessen. Both thought they were doing a great deal of good in keeping one flock aloof from the other ; in scrupling not to point out the errors and fallacies, the narrow prejudices and empty conceits, of the religion over the way !

Mr. James Bayford was becoming every day more like his stanch disciple, Josiah Glade ; less tolerant of any divine worship which differed from that established at Vale Street. He thought that he had arrived at this point from the consciousness of the rapid

growth of Tractarianism in his neighbourhood, and he had no longer any respect for persons when he saw the Protestant religion verging on Romanism. The Church of England was formal enough ; but this High Church was an abomination. And James Bayford thumped away at his pulpit cushions, and horrified his congregation with the doings at St. Martin's. Mr. Frederick Alland took the opposite view ; disparaged the attacks made upon him ; pointed out the delusions of Vale Street, the hyper-puritanism that saw a snare and a deceit in everything that he did. Mr. Alland did not even consider himself a Tractarian, and was certainly a man of sense enough to abjure the candle-lighting, the shuffling and bowing and "flip-flapping," common to very High Church establishments ; but he was fond of music, and long anthems, and critical sermons that did no one any good.

The Reverend William Chark noted these signs of party feeling with considerable regret ; a little while ago he had striven to change this—to bring the churchman and dissenter closer together in one common effort to do good, but

he had failed, as—he sighed at the thought—he had always failed in everything. All his life he had been an unlucky man. So 'far as his own success therein had been concerned, the prizes had always slipped his grasp ; the hopes he had aimed at, had burst like bubbles at his touch. Still, his had been a happy life, for he had been a man content with a little ; a happy life, for he had striven all that life to do his best, and been only hindered in a great success by his failing health and strength.

Perhaps he was conscious that his days were not likely to be long in the land ; becoming weaker every year had only rendered him more patient and self-denying—more of a Christian. Far from a deeply-read man, he was yet the superior in wisdom of both Bayford and Alland. He saw the harm that they were doing, in their narrow estimate of what was best and right ; and he had never failed to see the good which both sects, working together, would infallibly effect. Even at Chipnam, with Chipnam folk becoming each day less tolerant of each other's mode of worship, he was striving yet to bring the two young

preachers to a better, higher way of thinking;—if, before he became too weak to leave his villa on the heights, he could reconcile them somewhat, assure them that there was a better, higher method of regarding things divine! It troubled him more and more to think of the tares both were constantly sowing with their wheat.

He was becoming very weak. The sharp winter that year, which all England bore in remembrance and duly chronicled in its remarkable occurrences, was too much for him. He was continually finding substitutes at St. Edward's—Mr. Alland preached at least once a fortnight at the incumbent's church. Mr. Alland was still a regular visitor at Mr. Chark's—the Beethoven nights occurred very unfrequently now, but he was a constant guest; and both Mr. Chark and Amy knew the object of his coming. Nothing more had been said; no further proposal had been made. It was the old times, before Robert Bayford came home; but Frederick Alland approached surely the end which he had in view. He had discovered that there was an increasing passion in his

heart for Amy Saville—that she would be his future wife, or he should ever remain a solitary man in his villa near St. Martin's. He knew Robert Bayford was now wholly unworthy of her, and that the road before him to his happiness seemed very sure and straight. Mr. Chark noted all this also, and felt that when Amy was left alone in the world, it would be a wise choice of hers to select this grave, earnest man for her helpmate. He could never thoroughly understand why she had refused Mr. Alland after her former engagement had been broken off—where the mistake had occurred, and at what moment, to keep every one still in a state of misapprehension. He should have liked to see his ward more happy, less thoughtful for one so young. There had been a great change in her lately. Was it for her good?—or was it a something, the good or ill effects of which it was impossible for him—perhaps her—to accurately define?

More than once he sought to gain her confidence, by speaking of her past engagement or of Alland; but she shrunk from either subject, and went on her own silent way,

which Mr. Chark had not the heart to disturb.

Still, the silent way must reach a crisis, and Mr. Alland, proceeding in her footsteps, was bringing it closer every day—so close, that her heart fluttered very much when she was left for a moment alone with him—fluttered with a fear that was new, and for which she could not account. It had been so near an explanation one night, that this man, whom she revered still as a preacher, had been only balked of his second proposal by a message suddenly brought to Mr. Chark's villa.

Mr. Alland was wanted immediately — a gentleman wished to see him.

It was nine at night; and Mr. Alland, somewhat vexed at the interruption to a very formal, straightforward offer of his hand, for which he had been all that evening paving the way, rose and stated his intention of calling the following evening to discuss seriously an important matter connected with his happiness.

Mr. Chark looked towards Amy, who had turned pale at the boldness of the avowal,

and stretched forth his hand towards Amy when the door had closed behind the rector.

"You know what he means?"

"It would be affectation to deny it."

"Think seriously of it then, my child. Be prepared to accept or refuse him finally to-morrow. Not to refuse him without valid grounds for so doing, knowing how soon—how very soon, my dear—you will be alone and friendless in the world."

"I—I will think of this, dear guardian."

"Poor Robert is——"

"I know—I know!" she cried excitedly; "he is beyond my thought—belonging to a past wherein we both were different. Guardian dear, you will let me think of this alone?"

"Certainly, my love—certainly. God forbid that I should seek to influence you in that which relates to the whole happiness of your after-life! I will only pray to-night, my child, that your judgment may be right."

He rested his thin hand on her dark hair as he spoke; she bowed her head more and more, and covered her face with her

hands. Was she thinking of or weeping at the devoted lover coming with the morrow to lay his fortunes at her feet?

Meanwhile, Mr. Alland had left the villa—left it not alone; for outside, ankle-deep in the snow, a man in a travelling cloak, and with a cigar in his mouth, had been waiting for him, and had descended the hill with him.

“You here again!” had been the comment of the rector on perceiving him.

“Yes, here again,” was the reply, before the two men went down towards the high road together.

The man in the travelling cloak, and with the fur cap pulled down below his ears, was the first to break the silence that had ensued.

“Well, *figliuolo mio*, where’s your welcome?”

“You are never welcome here—I have told you so.”

“Dutiful son! Well, where are your congratulations?”

“On what?”

“On my rise in life—my leap from the Slough of Despond to the high and dry land, nearer the upper stratum whereon the rector of

Chipnam flourishes. Don't you see that I have left my rags in the slough aforesaid?"

"I would be glad to see that, were I certain——"

"Ah! there is no more certainty in appearances than in human life. I have had a rise and a fall.

'I venter'd for it, but instead of wealth
I purchast nought but wounds.'

A lucky *coup* at Homburg brought me to England with a little gold in my pockets. But the gold took to itself wings, and I sunk back to obscurity."

"You want money, of course?"

"Of course. It is due."

"I do not deny that."

"I shall return to the Continent. I have serious thoughts of settling down somewhere in Germany. It is amusing to attend the gaming-table, and watch the world going to the dogs. I was always a misanthrope."

The minister made no reply.

"I saw a neighbour of yours lose five thousand pounds in less than five hours, a couple of months ago."

“Who was that?”

“A man of the name of Bayford—brother to the popular preacher hereabouts.”

“Are you speaking truth?”

“Upon my soul! I felt for the fellow too, he took his losses so composedly. I thought those Bayfords were a very pious set.”

“What do you know of them?”

“Very little—nothing.”

“You appear curious concerning them.”

“I made the acquaintance of this Robert Bayford at Hamburgh—that is why. A very fair specimen of an English gentleman he proved to be. He helped me at a pinch—some of these days, when he is a rogue and a vagabond, I may make the *amende honorable*.”

“Was he alone?” asked the rector with some curiosity.

“Oh, no—he was accompanied by a very pretty English girl, who was ‘under his protection,’ as the phrase runs. A girl very nervous lest he should spend all his money at the tables; and I should say—I am no judge—devotedly attached to him. I heard before I left Homburg that he had taken to drinking—

I didn't believe it. People used to say that old Fred Alland took to drinking when luck went dead against him. People say anything!"

"You have been drinking to-night."

"*Au contraire*, the chance has not presented itself yet. When the chance does occur, I shall drink my fill and say nothing. 'Actions are male, words are female,' a shrewd Italian writer once said. Talking of writers, I will congratulate *you* at least."

He laid his hand with some semblance of affection on his son's arm.

"Upon my soul, Fred, I am proud of you. It is my pride in your ability that keeps me away from you—from disgracing you in the sight of the world by an exhibition of a vagabond father. Your last work was a triumph of religious criticism and chicanery. Some of these days you will be unfrocked for rank heresy, my lad."

"That will do."

"My compliments are distasteful, but I really mean them. You are a clever fellow—when you were a child of ten years old, I prophesied you would be. You inherit your literary

tastes, your critical acumen, from the gentleman who has the honour of addressing you—but you were never grateful.”

“Why do you come here for your money?” asked the rector somewhat abruptly, “do you mistrust my punctual payments?”

“No—but I have an interest here yet. I am interested in you—and your rival the dissenter. You are both fragments of a past wherein I was a respectable man.”

The son did not reply to the remark; he had heard something like it before, and it had aroused his curiosity, only to be baffled again. He did not expect to elicit any information from his sire, who was always cool and aggravating when he was not drunk and incapable. Punctually twice a year, now occasionally thrice, did this man fall like a shadow on his path, and remind him what a disreputable and irreclaimable father he was. He waited no longer in London for his remittance. When the son was more young, more enthusiastic perhaps, in the grand profession he had chosen, he had made one or two attempts at his father's reformation, and signally failed, as was natural,

and to be expected. And yet his father had not been a rogue and a vagabond all his life ; he could even remember him a very different man before he went abroad, and left him to the care of a sister, who died when he was at college. That sister had paid for his college education, spent, he found out after her death, her last shilling to make a minister of him ; and the first suspicion of his father's honesty was when he wrote from abroad and took all the credit to himself. "The son's life will be better than the father's," had been her dying words—it could scarcely have been worse, Alland thought, when the father had returned the easy scoffing, irreverent, begging vagabond that he was now, that he always would be. A dishonest man too, who made no secret of it ; who, with a strange perversity, seemed at times to rejoice in the past cunning that had made many dupes, and yet left him no wiser, richer, despite all the scheming to overreach his neighbours. A man ever a disgrace and a shame to him ! Alland might be pardoned for wishing to keep him ever at a distance. Money did that in part, and the

father's love of the London streets and a mixed society did the rest.

They reached the villa and entered by the usual means ; in the library some such a scene occurred of payment and receipt as we have sketched in the early portion of this work—as we might have sketched more than once had it been necessary to direct further attention to this business. The father received his quarter's salary with but scanty thanks, and departed. It may be remembered, that during his first visit to Chipnam he had patronized the " Plough "—a low inn on the outskirts of the town—on this occasion he selected the Royal Chipnam Hotel, where there was always fair accommodation for man and beast.

He went up the street towards it after his old fashion, with his hat tilted forwards, and his form inclining to the shadowy foot-path ; he skulked into the hotel, in a manner that set the waiter thinking about the spoons at once. In the coffee-room he spent the rest of the night drinking brandy and water in a wholesale manner ; early in the morning he reeled his way to the railway-station in the

usual style. All the way to London he slept composedly in a corner of the carriage ; at the first public-house opposite the London terminus he spent three shillings more in brandy and water before he came forth with his red, dim eyes, and shuffled his way along the streets. After a while he met a friend with a napless hat, and scarcely any shoes to his feet, and the two stood talking till they grew thirsty and went into a second public-house, where brandy and water was ordered for Alland, and a glass of gin, neat, for his *camarado*. This conference ended by Alland senior presenting his friend with a sovereign, to start him in life again, as he called it—a presentation made in a regal manner by the careless old scamp, and received with a thousand thanks by his sole-less companion. Then they shook hands and parted, Alland turning into a maze of streets, Drury Lane way ; where we have no occasion to follow him just at present.

CHAPTER II.

DISSENTER AND CHURCHMAN.

It will not surprise my readers much to inform them that the Reverend Frederick Alland had his weaknesses like other men. It is a matter for no astonishment that he was heartily ashamed of his father—his past recklessness and heartlessness, and his present vagabond career. He was a proud man, and this father perplexed him, even threatened, by his appearance at Chipnam, to let the whole world know from what a source he had sprung. Had he given signs of repentance, he would have dropped all pride and done his best for him in the broad light of the world ; but the father would be for ever a

drunkard and a man of no principle, one whose every word implied a sneer at men more honest than himself, and at acts more straightforward than his own.

He kept the secret of his father's existence to himself then ; not guarding it very jealously, but not parading it in the eyes of general society. When he married Amy Saville—in his heart he thought that event would occur presently—he should tell her the whole story. She should be the first to know what a shadow was always hanging over him.

Alland's shadow was the more dense because there was an uncertainty connected with it. His father had always implied that there was something in the background, which was better kept there—which he dared not avow himself, for his own security's sake, and yet which, in his cool, defiant manner, he at times hinted was connected with the Bayfords. It must be connected with them ; his father knew the Bayfords, and spoke of them occasionally. Before he came to Chipnam and was constituted rector he had a dreamy idea

of having heard the name!—he fancied so at times when James Bayford forced himself unpleasantly upon his notice, and rumours of the last sermon at Vale Street floated to his ears.

It was strange that he should entertain a hidden antipathy to this James Bayford, and yet experience for the brother who had loved Amy Saville a feeling of intense interest. Had Robert been his own brother, his heart could not have sunk more at the news which his father had brought him only a few hours ago.

Frederick Alland loved to sound to the depth of things; and being in no mood for theological study, he sat down at his library table to consider the matter before he repaired once more to Mr. Chark's villa to put the great question of his life. Why should he object to James Bayford, and feel so great an interest in Robert? The former was a good and pious man; the latter was weak and a sinner: the former was a man after his own heart, with a character like unto his; the latter had lost his moral stability with the loss of

a single hope, and dashed headlong towards ruin at once. Why should he respect Robert Bayford instead of his brother?

The enigma was not difficult of solution when he went direct to the clue. In his own study at least he spared not himself. Proud man as he was, he knew his own faults, and grieved now and then that he could not subdue them all and be faultless. He probed to the depth of his own character that morning, and solved the little mystery.

It was an unpleasant truth to confess, but he confessed it. James Bayford was too much like himself to gain his admiration. He was as clever a preacher; the town's-folk talked of him as much; the poor of his sect bepraised him; he had done éven more good, and made more converts than himself. Not such a studious or deeply read man, he devoted more time to the poor of Chipnam, and became, at least amongst the poor, more popular. He was his rival. He did not dislike him because he was a dissenter, because he objected to church formalities—that was only his excuse for disliking him after all! He

disliked his influence in the town, and the frequency with which his name was on the lips of his neighbours. He had disliked him more than ever lately, because more than ever he had been gaining ground and filling the Vale Street Chapel at all manner of odd times and seasons. Only a few days ago he had heard of an offer being made James Bayford to repair to London and take the charge of a larger congregation there ; no one lately had offered him anything, the critics had been rather severe on his last work, and the bishop of the diocese had been cool to him ever since its publication.

But this Robert Bayford was a man whom he could have loved—a man over whose moral decadence he mourned. He was one whom he had unintentionally wronged; through him and him alone had the first step downward been made. If he had had only a brother like him, he would have been a better man himself. In his utter isolation he had become hard and cold. He could have done much for that man—the scorn with which Robert Bayford had repelled his offer of friendship

only drew him by the strange rule of contrariety towards him still. He almost felt as if he were still engaged in wronging him, when he deliberated upon the second offer of his hand to Amy.

In the midst of all these thoughts it struck him that he knew more of Robert Bayford's whereabouts than the minister of Vale Street ; that he had news to communicate to the brother which he could not justly keep back, however he might object to a personal interview with the dissenter. He would write to him. Half-way through his letter, he tore the note paper into strips. He would go to him. Why should he be afraid of always crossing the path of James Bayford?

It was his duty to detail the sad tidings to the brother—he had never shrunk from anything that he considered his duty. What matter that James Bayford had implied that he had turned Amy's thoughts away from one to whom she had been engaged—that he had misjudged him. It made no difference in the step he was compelled to adopt. He wished that he could have taken good news to the

dissenter's cottage ; but it was not to be, so he set forth with his evil tidings.

James Bayford was at home when the churchman announced his presence at the little cottage.

"Did Mr. Alland wish to see *him*?" Susan had asked, in her surprise at his appearance there.

"For a few moments, if you please."

"My brother has not been very well lately—I think that he has been working too hard. I hope you have not come to disturb him about church or parish business."

"No, Miss Bayford, I have merely brought him news of one dear to him and you."

"Robert?"

The minister nodded assent, and Susan Bayford flew at once in search of her brother. Presently the three were seated in the front room, Mr. James Bayford close to the table, with one nervous hand beating upon it.

"You bring me bad news, Mr. Alland ; I read it on your face."

"I regret to say that you are right."

Alland was astonished at the little sign of

coldness exhibited in the dissenter's demeanour, until he remembered that James Bayford had been surprised out of his customary manner by the information of which he had announced himself in possession. He had expected more *hauteur* and less gratitude for the trouble he had taken.

For that trouble he began to offer an odd sort of apology, till arrested by his listener.

"Mr. Bayford," he said, "you may think that it would have been more graceful on my part to have written to you, and spared you my presence here; but I thought the news could be better related to you in person. You must not believe that I have forced my way into your home with any other motive than that which I have stated."

"I believe you have acted in all kindness, and I thank you for it, sir," said Bayford.

"I met with one yesterday who saw your brother Robert at Homburg."

"Alone?"

"No, sir."

There was a pause. That might be considered bad news, but it was to be expected.

“I thought you would at least like to hear that he was alive and well, although the news gives no hope of him settling down, or coming back here the same man we both have known. My informant tells me that he was a constant frequenter at the gaming-tables, and that he had seen him lose five thousand pounds in a single night. This may be truth, or may be false—my informant is not wholly to be relied on.”

James Bayford and his sister drew a deep breath of relief; there was a chance that the news might be exaggerated, after all.

“My second motive for calling upon you was the fear that this news, highly coloured, perhaps, might reach your ears from another channel, and afford you unnecessary pain. Such as the news is, must be taken with reserve.”

“Who is this informant?”

Alland reddened.

“A man in whom I am interested, and to whom I allow a small income,” said he; “a man who wanders to and fro, and is reckless and unfortunate and devoid of principle. Still one in whom I am interested.”

“And he knows my brother?”

“He mentioned him as your brother.”

“I fear your news is too true, sir. For the interest you have taken in this matter, let me thank you again. Poor Robert!”

The minister leaned his head upon his hand in his perplexity. There was the dark life of his brother beyond, and he could not affect it by a hair's-breadth. Susan touched his arm and aroused him.

“Don't grieve, James! We shall see him again—once again the chance will be offered us of working together for his sake. God will offer that chance—I feel assured of it.”

“Let us hope so.”

He turned suddenly to Mr. Alland.

“How long would it take me to reach Homburg?”

“Two days,” said Mr. Alland; “but you would not be likely to find him there now. This incident concerning him occurred some months ago.”

“He has left, then. When he was less restless—when he was a better man—he could not remain long in one spot. I will call at

Saville House to-morrow, and try and learn if the servants there have any knowledge of his whereabouts."

"I called yesterday morning," said Mr. Alland.

James Bayford looked very eagerly towards him.

"You are interested in him still; you are sorry for all that has happened."

"I am sorry at the retrogression of any good man," replied Mr. Alland, rising.

He bade good morning to Miss Bayford, who responded and murmured her thanks for his visit; he went out of the house and across to the garden-gate, accompanied by the minister, bare-headed. A sudden impulse, for which he could never afterwards account, led Alland to turn and face his clerical rival again.

"Mr. Bayford, will you believe that I had no intention of winning Miss Saville's affection away from him?"

"I will believe it, if you wish."

"You doubted it some months ago."

"I doubted if you knew the true state of your own heart, Mr. Alland," said the minis-

ter—"if you had not been unintentionally led away."

"I had not the least wish to stand between him and his happiness," said Alland, warmly; "I could have loved Miss Saville as a sister all my life. No one, Mr. Bayford, regretted the disruption of that engagement more than myself."

"Sir, I will believe that."

"Thank you," said Mr. Alland, gratefully.

He was turning away when he thought he would add a little more. He felt strangely communicative that morning; strangely desirous that a new and better impression should be left with Mr. Bayford, as had been left with himself.

"In a day or two hence, you may possibly hear that Miss Saville is engaged to be my wife. What will you think then?"

"I will think of what you have told me this morning."

"Candidly, I love Miss Saville now with all my heart. I seek my after-happiness in her. At some future time, in some future meeting with your brother, when he may hear

of this and speak bitterly of me and my motives, will you tell him all that I said to-day?"

"Should he and I ever meet, I will do so, Mr. Alland."

"You look grave—do you blame this step?"

"No—why should I?" returned Bayford. "I fear the poor girl will soon be alone in the world. I hear many sad rumours concerning the health of Mr. Chark; I meet him less often in the streets and lanes of Chipnam. Is there any hope of better health for him?"

The rector shook his head sadly.

"A good man," murmured James Bayford.

Alland echoed his verdict, and then bade the dissenter good day.

A fragment of ice had fallen from the wall that sectarian prejudices had built up between them—would the thaw continue, or a second frost, more intense and bitter than the first, set these two men's hearts against each other once again?

CHAPTER III.

AN ODD COURTSHIP.

THE Reverend Frederick Alland had to postpone his proposal of marriage *sine die*. The illness of his friend Mr. Chark took a sudden and alarming turn, and scared all thoughts of marrying and giving in marriage away. A sudden and desperate weakness, which awoke all Amy's solicitude, filled her with the dread of a sad parting, that with every day and hour seemed advancing nearer to the end.

With every day and hour, also, the wedding day of Josiah Glade and Susan Bayford approached nearer ; it was settled for the thirtieth of January, and this quiet pair of con-

venticle doves became more excited and bewildered with every fresh inroad made into the month. I cannot say that the prospect of his approaching felicity made Josiah any the happier—he knew his best and happiest time was coming; but the days before the golden one were long and tedious, and tried his temper. He had always objected to waiting for anything, and he fidgeted, brushed his hair the wrong way, broke into a cold perspiration, and was only a reasonable being in Susan Bayford's society. Of course, he argued with her at every available opportunity; but then he argued with everybody and his affianced stood not exempt, though he was less brusque in his manner than he had been before he was sure of her good opinion.

James Bayford had not given much thought to his own housekeeping arrangements. He was undecided whether to give up the cottage and live with Susan and her husband, as they wished him to do, or keep to the old spot that he had learned to value and think his home. It would be very dreary, all alone there with the bees and a daft housekeeper; but then he

was a studious man, and a little contented him ; and Glade would be a better and a more amiable man, if he had no one to argue with him on theological points. Husband and wife, in his opinion, were always so much better left to themselves. Even Dorcas was going back to the sham philosopher and the cross-grained old lady, he thought with a shudder—what a life for her too, after keeping her brother's house ! And yet she, whose position would be considerably worse than his own, did not repine. Why should he think it would be lonely to be left in the old cottage ? Once for a day or two he had had a thought that Robert and he would be located there after Susan's marriage, he being Robert's comforter, adviser, tutor in the great science he professed to inculcate—and Robert repaying him by his cordial, honest full-heartedness, by that brotherly love which he thought would never have known a diminution. After that thought Robert had returned, begun his new and worse life, and that hope had foundered with others, leaving the future of James Bayford still more undecided.

“Time enough to think of my future,” James Bayford would say every time the subject was introduced. “I don’t believe that I shall have made up my mind until you are Mrs. Glade, Susan.”

He had many things to think of during that month of preparation for the wedding, more than he had even bargained for. Early in that month the incumbent of St. Edward’s fell ill, as we have already stated, and had not been seriously ill two days, before he sent for James Bayford to the villa.

The dissenter was prompt to respond to any signal of distress, no matter from what quarter it evolved ; the same hour that brought him the message found him standing by the bedside of William Chark.

“I have been thinking so much about you, Mr. Bayford,” said the incumbent, as the dissenter entered, “that I could not rest without seeing you, and telling you a little of my thoughts. You do not object to the difference in *our* religious views?”

“No, sir—no.”

“You have been more hard on the church

the last three months than you have ever been in your life. I did not know what further change your own tenets might have undergone."

"We need not discuss the question, Mr. Chark. After all, it is not one the most important."

"I am glad to hear you say so."

"Let me express my sorrow, Mr. Chark, to find you reduced thus low; deprived for a time of taking your share in the good work, from which your heart has never flinched."

"Only my strength, thank God," said he, with a flushed cheek; "my heart has always been in the good cause."

"I believe it."

"Deprived for a time!" said the incumbent, echoing the former words of James Bayford, "for that time which comprises my share of work on earth, my share of love in my work, and in the redemption of my fellow-men. But, Bayford, I don't repine. I was always sure I should never make an old man!"

Bayford for once was at a loss how to reply.

Here was a good man standing in the val-

ley of the shadow of death, and requiring no consolation ; a man whose life had been a good and earnest one, and been spent in peace-making and soul-saving ; a man nearer heaven than himself.

“ But I have so much to say to you, not to-day or to-morrow, but in the course of many interviews with which I hope you will favour me, till—the last !”

“ My time is at your disposal, reverend sir.”

“ I wish to speak to you of your own position in the world ; what I consider your reigning weakness, and which you may call firmness if you will. I wish you and Alland to sit down here by my bedside together, and talk to me ; to let me in my own simple way talk to you two earnest but mistaken men, and tell you what your faults are. Ah ! you will not come.”

“ I have promised, sir.”

“ I have a faint hope that we three ministers of God may arrive at a better understanding with each other, if we have the courage to look our crotchets in the face, and not hug them to our breasts too closely. More than

this, Bayford, when the subject—it is a great one—becomes wearisome, or my efforts fail, or you and Alland object to my assertions, I shall wish to speak of your brother Robert—of Amy, my ward, to be left standing alone in the world, where trials are many. Will you tire of coming, sir?”

“I hope not—I think not. But ——”

“But!” repeated the invalid.

“But I am a man hard to convert to any particular views; you do not wish to make a churchman of me, sir?”

“No.”

“You do not wish to lead me into argument on theological points with Mr. Alland? You will pardon me, but that will not conduce to any good end in us, or any contentment in you.”

“Not a single argument on any subject whatever, Bayford,” said Mr. Chark, faintly smiling.

“I shall come all the more readily to see you, sir. I was afraid you were deceiving yourself with vain hopes.”

“No; I am buoying myself with hopes that

will only prove vain by the perversity of my friends—shall I see you to-morrow?”

James Bayford assented, and on the morrow found Mr. Alland there also. Mr. Chark was better that day—able to leave his bed and find his way to the favourite couch in the sitting-room, wherein he had almost doubted entering again. The rector and the dissenter shook hands, spent an hour and a half conversing on every-day topics, went down the hill together, parting at the hill's foot. Bayford called twice or thrice a week, occasionally meeting Mr. Alland, more often finding him absent, or hearing that he had called and taken his departure.

Very plainly and clearly he saw whither the efforts of this amiable old gentleman tended, though utterance had not yet been given to one wish that might startle him and Alland. Chark spoke a great deal of Mr. Alland to Bayford in the rector's absence—he knew the best deeds and the noblest actions of the man—and Bayford felt convinced that in Alland's presence and *his* absence, stories that he had almost forgotten himself, were detailed for the edification

and example of the churchman. Mr. Chark was anxious, very anxious, to see these men better friends, working together in God's cause side by side, like two of God's trusty servants. James Bayford did not believe it could ever come to pass; he felt that, in one or two instances, he had misjudged Alland, even formed a false conception of his character, but he could see no plan by which he and Alland could progress on together. It was but the old wish—the old natural goodness of heart which had produced the Chipnam lectures, the greatest failure of the day. He and Alland might be better friends in the future, attack each other's creed less often; but any hope beyond that, he felt convinced, must wither in the light of plain practicalness—the sober reality of every day.

Mr. Chark was a theorist—more, he was a man becoming very weak, and seeing not the world with the eyes of those stripped for the combat in Life's Arena; why pain him at the last, by saying that each had no reverence for the other's faith? He would be glad when Mr. Chark spoke of Amy Saville and

his brother Robert—expressed his thoughts of the one and his fears for the other, and asked his opinion concerning both. He had promised him to speak of that, and yet the sands ran on, and swiftly; the successor to St. Edward's had already arrived, and had taken his place in the pulpit.

Meanwhile, births occurred and marriages were made in Chipnam; time waits for no man, and studies no man's memory. Josiah Glade and Susan Bayford's marriage was very close at hand now; the plain, grey wedding-dress was made by Dorcas's own light fingers—a new effort at dress-making, which she had undertaken much to Susan's peace of mind.

Mr. James Bayford was inspecting his sister's wedding-dress by the grey twilight of that January afternoon, some three days before the marriage. It had been tried on in Susan's bedroom, and pronounced perfect; and now there was Dorcas standing by his side, and holding it to the window for his inspection and critical approval. He looked at the dress, and thought it very pretty and neat, as befitted a staid maiden, who had not even

had a fair share of the "frivolities" of life. He looked beyond it at Dorcas Glade holding the dress before him, and thought that she was very pretty and neat too—an idea that he had had for many a long day, though he had never had the courage to confess it.

But they were talking of marriage, and giving in marriage, and such talk puts very odd ideas into a person's head—or revives very forcibly old ideas one may have fostered. James Bayford was a very modest man in some matters. He had had a firm conviction for a long while that he was particularly unsuited for ladies' society—that ladies did not take to him, in fact. He had almost a chivalric respect for the sex, but it was a respect that was undemonstrative, and so kept the ladies in ignorance. He fancied that his manners were too abrupt, his air too grave for the fair sex in general; one lady, in particular, he believed was always inclined to be terrified in his presence if he spoke too much to her. And that one in particular was holding the wedding-dress for his inspection—had been sent down from upstairs by Susan to fulfil that office.

"It looks very like reality now, Miss Dorcas," he said; "I have almost imagined it a dream till to-day."

Dorcas was folding up the dress then very carefully.

"I wonder when your turn will come to try the wedding-dress on, Dorcas?"

Dorcas flushed up very strangely at this morbid pleasantry.

"My time, sir?—never!"

"A bold assertion for one so young."

"I shall never marry, sir; long ago, Mr. Bayford, I made up my mind to that."

"A very wrong determination, Dorcas," said Mr. Bayford, almost sternly; "no young man or woman has a right to make these foolish promises, knowing not what the future has in store. It is akin to the wicked, selfish act of swearing to do this or that at any hazard—it is decidedly wrong."

He had assumed the part of pastor and master instead of friend, and Dorcas was at once submissive. She had been one of his flock for too many years to think any of his remarks could be out of place. She was sorry

that she had suffered to escape an old determination which she had formed, and thus brought on her a merited reproof. In private life—out of his pulpit—she had never seen Mr. James Bayford so excited.

“It was wrong, sir,” she murmured; “but I had a reason for my determination at the time, and I thought there was nothing to change me.”

“Do you think there is anything now?”

“Nothing, sir.”

She had compressed her lips, but she had not flinched from his searching looks. Her firmness was strangely irritating James Bayford—her first assertion had disturbed him—her last roused him to more than he had ever dreamed of saying. Thinking of it afterwards in his own room, he was amazed at his audacity. But then he been amazed by a sudden exhibition of firmness on the part of a young lady whom he had believed the most amiable, lovable, tractable being he had ever come across in his pilgrimage.

“Nothing to alter a determination formed—how long since?” he said.

Dorcas did not like the subject, and was hurriedly making preparations to return to Miss Bayford.

“Not long since, sir.”

“You have met with a disappointment?”

“No, sir—no.”

“Don’t run away. Wait a moment, Dorcas—pray explain this?”

“Oh! sir, there is nothing to explain.”

“How could you have been so wilful as to form a resolution of so stern a nature? How is it that nothing can alter your intention?”

“I don’t know, sir,” was the true feminine reply to this.

“Suppose—suppose,” passing his hand nervously across his forehead, “I was to ask you to change this absurd resolution, and take pity on the bachelor’s home which Susan is about to leave so desolate—only for a moment suppose that?”

Dorcas had turned as white as a sheet. She had caught the wedding-dress in her hands, and was half across the room with it when, with very unclerical celerity, he stepped between her and the door.

"Don't suppose it, Dorcas—believe reality, and that it has been a long, thought of mine, escaping now for the time crudely and roughly! As well not six months, nine months hence. not?"

"Pray let me pass," gasped Dorcas.

"Will you not give me an answer? you not promise to consider all that I said?"

Dorcas mustered her forces for her. She saw that he was in earnest, and it was better to answer at once.

"No, sir, no!" she cried; "a thousand times no, for both our sakes!"

The minister let her hurry from the room, turned back to the window, looked out, there a moment, and then hastened away to his study, resolving to turn the key on new trouble which had come so suddenly upon him.

He arrived but at one conclusion—that all had been very foolish and uncalled-for on his part. That nothing in Dorcas's demeanor had warranted him in thus treating her.

brute. He had suddenly dashed into courtship with savage ferocity, and been justly recompensed. He should have proceeded with greater caution, and spared himself the humiliation of a refusal.

When Josiah Glade came that evening he would tell him all, and ask him to take his apologies to Dorcas for his ungentlemanly and unclerical behaviour. Had he been the Grand Turk he could not have thrown the handkerchief in a more free and easy manner. What if it had been a long, long thought of his, how was she to know that? What if he had striven with it, and tried to believe it was wrong of him to think of marriage—a state that might wean him somewhat from the one engrossing subject of his creed—that he was better single, for his flock's sake? What if his sister's marriage had turned again his thoughts in the old direction, and finally led him to make a fool of himself?

“Well, well,” said this simple-minded man, bringing all the points of discussion to one head, after the fashion of his sermons in Vale Street, “*in conclusion*, it's better over—

brought to an end, if even in this uncere-
monious fashion. I shall have more time now
to think of matters less worldly and selfish."

So he dismissed the subject, or thought that
he had dismissed it; for he was a man unused
to "love affairs," and did not make them the
business of his life. He should get over it in
good time—there was nothing to weep about
or mourn at. The blow was not so heavy
but that he could bear it like a man, regard-
ing the lonely future before him in a manly
spirit.

CHAPTER IV.

SECRET—AND NO SECRET.

DORCAS GLADE hurried homewards that evening before her brother's arrival. There was much to do at home, and she took a sudden interest in its completion, and departed before the table-lamp was burning in the dissenter's parlour. She was glad to get away and feel the cold north wind blowing upon her heated temples, as she went along the country road towards her brother's cottage. She would be glad to sit down and think of all the strange things that had happened that night—of the

sudden rising of the stream that had hitherto flowed so peacefully on, and the change that it had brought to her and others.

When she was at home in her brother's house, she forgot all about the extra work which had been her excuse for leaving Susan Bayford, and sat down with clasped hands and thoughtful looks. Then it all ended in an outburst of passionate tears, as was natural, if incomprehensible ; and before the tears were dry, or she had recovered her composure, there was a summons that presaged a visitor at the door. The visitor proved to be her father, who, with his straw hat very much on the back of his head, came at a leisurely rate of progression into the parlour.

" Well, Dorcas, I scarcely expected finding you at home this evening," he said on entering ; " but I wanted a change, and I thought I'd take the chance of finding you."

" I have been home some time," said Dorcas, for the want of a better answer.

Mr. Glade senior kissed his daughter, sat down, and fanned himself with his straw hat, as though the weather were sultry.

“I shall be glad when you’re back again at the office, my dear.”

“You will not have very long to wait, father.”

“The old lady’s been going it this evening. Her health and her irritability are now fairly established again, thank God !”

“Did you not promise me to make more allowance for mother’s fretfulness, after I had left you—to study and humour her more?”

“And I have kept my word, Dorcas. For that very reason, I have left the house, and come for a stroll in this direction. The weather was stormy, the atmosphere was charged with connubial lightning, and philosophy said, vacate your position, and try a stroll in the dark. Vacated accordingly, and stroll ended as you see. Philosophy—what’s the matter?”

Looking more intently at his daughter, he had become aware that her eyes were red and swollen, as though she had been crying—that her hands were trembling, despite her efforts to keep them still. The father forgot his philosophical indifference at once.

Dorcas in trouble, was a new feature in the domesticities, and took him off his guard at once.

“My dear girl, what can have happened?”

“I don’t know that I have a right to tell you—and yet to-morrow you will hear it all from his own lips, I am sure. And—and it is not right to keep the secret from you.”

“Secret—secret!” he repeated; “surely there are no more secrets coming to disturb us?”

“No; only this is a secret that must not be bruited abroad, for Chipnam folk to talk over and wonder at. We must spare his name—his feelings—all we can.”

“Certainly; but who is *he*? Take it coolly and quietly, Dorcas, and let not your nerves get the upper hand of you. I’m in no hurry for the revelation, girl. Shall we say to-morrow?”

“No; I will tell you now.”

Dorcas took a long breath, as though the confession required more nerve than she possessed just then; then said, hurriedly—

“Mr. Bayford has asked me to be his wife.”

“Mr. Bay——”

This wretched representative of philosophy gave way on the instant. His voice broke in attempting to repeat the name of him who had offered his heart and hand to his daughter; he passed his hand over the bumps in his forehead, he stared over his daughter's head at the opposite wall, as though a ghost were there to scare him.

“I—I wonder what brought me here to-night?” he muttered, somewhat irrelevantly.

His nervous hand unfastened the two top buttons of his waistcoat, loosened his neckerchief, began beating a wild tattoo on the top of the walking-stick he invariably carried—his round grey eyes continued to stare over his daughter's head at the wall beyond.

“And you—and you ——” he said, hoarsely.

“Have refused him.”

“Loving him as you did, girl—I see that in your face, I read that in your heart,” he cried.

"I don't say that," said Dorcas, trying to retain her calmness; but her face becoming more white and rigid every instant.

"Well, well, it is hard to confess," said Glade. "I have no right to press you thus far."

"His whole life will be a sad and desolate one—he who deserved so different a fate! He so humble, earnest, so true a Christian, so good a man, to be refused by a poor girl like me!"

"Why did you refuse him?"

"Do *you* ask me!" cried Dorcas, with excitement; "you who called me and Josiah to your side when we were scarcely more than children, and told the long story of a past temptation and fall?"

"And repentance?" he added, eagerly.

"And repentance."

"But—but what had that story to do with James Bayford, girl?" he asked, feebly.

"I did not know till a little while ago—till Josiah's engagement betrayed it, and suggested the whole truth. I did not know that when you urged upon us all to work together

for one end, to retrieve the wrong done in the past, and lift the heavy weight from your soul, that that wrong was done to James Bayford's father."

"You are the first to discover all the sin and shame that has kept me so long a miserable man," he groaned; "that has been ever between me and all attempts to mask my heart's bitterness and wretchedness. Josiah—Josiah," he said in a husky whisper, "must not know the whole truth yet."

"He has learned it all, sir," said the deep voice of Josiah Glade, from the door of the room.

Father and daughter both looked up, and met the sad face of the son turned in their direction. Josiah Glade had heard the story of the minister's courtship, and had hastened home to see his sister, and comfort her, if it were necessary. He had entered the house by his pass-key, and heard the rest of a story commenced years ago, and the actors wherein had not been indicated.

For some years the Glades had been aware of a great sin committed by the head of their

house in his younger days ; when Josiah was seventeen, and Dorcas fifteen, he had called them to his side and told them how it had happened, what had led him to relate to them the sad details of his own moral abasement.

In his younger days, it appeared, that he had been clerk to a little publishing firm. The firm consisted of two partners : the junior, a high-principled, but somewhat stern man—the senior, a very clever, shrewd man of business, whose own success in the world, at any sacrifice, by any means, was the sole object of his study. The junior partner was a man whose health debarred him from constant attendance at his business, but whose implicit faith in his partner had led him to embark a fair fortune in the enterprise, and entrust the sole management to him. To abridge matters—for we need not enter into details of any length here—the clerk Glade discovered an elaborate system of swindling, committed by the senior partner on the junior—a deliberate and skilful falsification of accounts, by which the profits flowed into one pocket, and money to keep an apparently healthy busi-

ness together, was drawn from the other. Glade made the discovery, and was tempted to conceal it by the senior partner. His salary was doubled—a loan of which he had been in need was proffered him; every temptation to make a villain of him was essayed for a time with success. Finally, the bubble burst; the senior partner decamped; the firm broke up; the defalcations were discovered; the junior partner was ruined.

Glade's position at this time was an embarrassing one; of late years he had been accustomed to draw money as he liked, so that he overlooked the knavery of his employer; proofs of money having been abstracted by him were readily apparent, but the warranty for the act did not appear. The whole enormity of the case struck the clerk when the ruin of his first benefactor became imminent; the perils of his position, too, were great—on his master's firmness or clemency depended his liberty or incarceration. He was truly repentant, and before the discovery of his shame was made he took the savings of three

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years to his ruined master, offered them to him, confessed the whole truth, and asked for mercy. He had robbed his employer to a greater extent than he had imagined ; it had been all a matter of loan in his opinion, to be cleared off some day when his family was " more off his hands ;" so he had borrowed, with the consent of the knave, the money that legally belonged to the honest man. He had enmeshed himself in a net of folly, weakness and wrong—more, he had connived at the utter ruin of the man who had placed him in his position of trust. That man forgave him, and promised to keep his secret, on one condition—that condition Glade swore solemnly to fulfil. Above two thousand pounds had been taken in the course of three years by Glade ; the first two thousand pounds that were ever saved by him and his family should be paid to the children of the ruined man. If fortune went ever against the Glades, reparation must rest ; but if time brought round the chance, atonement must be made, and confession of that wrong which rendered atonement necessary. The ruined partner bound Glade by



an oath to fulfil this—to ask his children's help to fulfil this whenever they were growing up to man's estate, and could understand the folly and wickedness of their sire. The employer, whose health had been degenerating for some time, sank rapidly after the great disappointment, and died a ruined man, leaving a widow and three young children for the world to see after. His death confirmed Glade in his first resolution, and rendered him an altered man. He never forgot his promise ; he never swerved from his first intention ; he never lost sight of the family of the man he had ruined ; he had even followed the younger son to Chipnam. Near to the representative of that family he had found a means of getting a living for some years. His children had learned the secret, names and dates excepted, when they were old enough to understand it. They had been children to work with him night and day ever since ; to save money, and work hard for money, in the hope of one day raising the heavy burden from the father's heart.

And that part of the secret which Glade,

senior, had kept back, Dorcas, a clear-sighted woman, had seen for some time. Her father's and mother's surprise at Josiah's engagement to Susan Bayford had first betrayed the whole truth to her. Josiah Glade had been engaged to the daughter of the man her father had helped to ruin ; she who knew how cruelly the Glades had treated the Bayfords, could not accept the hand of another of the race, however deeply her heart might plead in his favour.

When the two thousand pounds were saved—there were but three hundred deficit now, thanks to the better position of the son—the truth would have come out. What would James Bayford have thought if, knowing the truth and the disgrace, she had accepted his love as a right ? My readers can understand Dorcas Glade's determination to remain single, I think, without any more remarks on her feelings. And as we have disturbed the action of our story to explain the past, he may prefer to know how the altercation ended, without any more details in this place.

Josiah Glade had heard the whole truth,

and was standing there looking none the better for the discovery. As the sum they three had jointly saved advanced towards the amount of forfeit-money, old Glade had often wondered how Josiah would receive the first revelation. Now, the plain fact was before him.

"Do you blame me for keeping this part of my story back, Josiah?" he said.

"No, I blame myself for not seeing the whole truth; and I blame you for letting this engagement continue between me and Susan Bayford."

"Josiah, you will never——" began Dorcas.

"I will give up Susan Bayford, for the same reason that you have declined the offer of her brother's hand. Father, to these Bayfords, for my own sake, I must tell the whole truth."

"Do as you will! There is no help for it, if you think it necessary to break off the engagement."

"Is it not necessary?"

"I don't know—I can't think—I give up!" groaned the father.

Josiah turned to Dorcas.

“You, who have let this go on also, cannot think it is necessary? You would not still advocate disguise and deceit, Dorcas?”

“Your engagement was contracted in all good faith, and you have no right to break it,” said Dorcas, warmly.

“Contracted under false pretences, with Susan ignorant that my father helped, in no small degree, to her downfall.”

“Spare me, boy, just now!” moaned his father.

“Pardon me, sir,” said Josiah, with a gentleness very new to him, “I do not taunt you with the sin for which you are truly penitent. I have been a witness to your struggles—I have struggled with you. I am taking now the side of the Bayfords, thinking, as they will think, when they hear of this. They have never known disgrace; they have been wronged by us; the past poverty of the younger son and his sister Susan was our doing. Is it likely that I can expect my happiness to come from them?”

“Yes,” Dorcas insisted.

This assertion only rendered her brother

more irritable. He turned to leave the house again.

“ I will go at once and end this. The time is short, and a moment’s delay is dangerous. Don’t sit up for me, Dorcas.”

He rushed out of the house and dashed along, full of his project, to James Bayford’s cottage. He could not have had much time for sober thought on his way ; he worked himself into such a state of excitement as he hurried along. He was the old irascible, impatient Josiah Glade; the love thoughts that had rendered him more temperate had been thrown to the winds, and he was his dear disagreeable self again. He knew that he was going to break down all his own happiness—perhaps Susan’s—but he had arrived at the conviction that it was his duty, and on he went, without any reflection as to the best method of procedure.

There was a light in the cottage window—brother and sister were still in the parlour. As he went up the garden path he could hear them talking together within. He hammered away at the door, brushed past the servant,

entered, without ceremony, the room he had quitted only a little while ago.

James Bayford was sitting by the fire, regarding the red embers somewhat mournfully; Susan was talking to him and consoling him. Glade guessed the subject of discourse before they turned round at his abrupt reappearance before them.

"Has anything happened?" brother and sister exclaimed at the same time.

"I have come to break off the engagement, Susan," he said, very hoarsely, but very fiercely—"to say the marriage cannot proceed—to pray your forgiveness for having inveigled you into the contract. I have a long story to tell concerning the days when you were children, and my father was—strange as it may seem—your father's clerk."

"What! have *you* discovered that story too?" exclaimed James Bayford.

"Discovered it?—ye-es, I have," cried Glade, taken aback.

"I had hoped that it belonged to the by-gones for ever," said he.

"You know it, sir?"

“To be sure. My father’s story, Susan and I have known all our lives ; your father’s connection with it your mother betrayed to me in a fit of ill-temper, for which she has never forgiven herself, despite my promise to keep her secret and say nothing. Your share in that old story only does you credit, Glade—why do you look so desperately discomfited ?”

“You—you know all about it ?”

“Certainly—I’m surprised you do, though. Sit down, man—sit down.”

“But Susan !”

Susan was bewildered. What the Glades had to do with her father’s ruin she had not known. Josiah Glade saw that, and burst forth again. With his usual impetuosity he would not hear a word ; he said that he was totally unworthy of her—that he gave her up—that all must be ended at once—that he was a villain, and she was too good for him—that everybody had kept him in the dark (this was a side-thrust at J. B.); and then, after two leaps in the air, he dashed from the house again, and slammed the door after him.

Slammed it—fortunately or unfortunately—too soon, and shut the tails of his coat in, and fixed himself there in a very awkward and ridiculous position. He paused for a while and ground his teeth ; then he knocked softly for the servant, and, receiving no answer, brought the house nearly down at his second application, which also being unattended to, suggested the expediency of taking his coat off and leaving it there on the door-step. He was thinking of this expedient when the door suddenly opened, and the strong arm of the minister reached forth and secured him by the collar.

“ Come back, you blockhead!” he said ; “ a pretty state of things you have left behind here. You have frightened Susan out of her senses.”

“ Where is she ?”

“ On the hearth-rug, in a fainting fit.”

“ Oh ! what a wretch I am !”

Glade dashed into the parlour again, followed by the minister.

“ It’s all my fault—and wickedness,” said Glade to Bayford, looking up as he leaned

over Susan, and pushed the small servant away.

“Exactly. Do you think she could so easily part with your pig-headed self?”

The minister was indignant, and did not study his words. Glade did not appear to object to them just then.

So the engagement was not broken off, and James Bayford even walked home with Josiah, when Susan had recovered from the first great weakness in which she had ever indulged.

Walked home to see Dorcas, on whose past conduct a very bright light had suddenly fallen. So bright a light, that the minister's heart beat quite tumultuously. That night there was a second engagement entered into, after all; and Dorcas's invincible determination actually underwent a change in less than four hours. Such is woman !

CHAPTER V.

STILL TREATS OF LOVE MATTERS.

NEED we take up much space just now by referring at any greater length to the story introduced into the middle of our last chapter? Is there any necessity for the fragment of mystery remaining—any weak supposition on our part that there remains one reader ignorant who represents that senior partner of the old firm that came to grief? The vagabond who has fitfully passed to and fro across these pages like a troubled dream figure,—who is the father of the rector of St. Martin's, and the man with the craving for money and drink,—we need scarcely say was

the partner of poor old Bayford, who was treated so ill by his fellow-men.

The Reverend James Bayford had known this for some years, though he was ignorant of the whereabouts, even the existence, of Mr. Alland's father. He had ascertained that Alland was at least ignorant of the fact; that in the days of the partnership Alland had been brought up by his aunt, away from the business; and the name of Bayford had not struck him when he had assumed the rectorship of St. Martin's, simply from the fact that it had never been mentioned to him. There was no occasion to revive that sad old story of man's breach of trust; if Frederick Alland were ignorant of his father's sins, he, Bayford, was not cruel enough to taunt him with them, or remind him how they had affected him, and kept him poor for many years. He and Susan were both reticent natures, and concealed their knowledge of these facts, as our reader has perceived, very well indeed. Robert had been away from home when misfortune first had struck them down—the name of Alland he had long since forgotten.

The marriage having occurred, as arranged, between Josiah Glade and Susan Bayford in the shady chapel of Vale Street, with Mr. Bayford to join their hands together in the holy bonds of wedlock, the little storm that had ruffled the surface gradually subsided. The young couple started on their wedding trip, Mr. James Bayford was the acknowledged suitor to Dorcas Glade, consequently a more frequent visitor at the *Gazette* office, where Mr. Glade, senior, spent his life in dodging him, not having the courage to face his future son-in-law yet awhile.

During all this while the poor incumbent of St. Edward's grew no stronger. If there were no signs of any rapid decrease of strength, still the doctors had certified to the days of William Chark being numbered. Mr. Bayford kept the promise made some weeks ago, called regularly at the villa on the heights, met Mr. Alland there, listened very patiently to all that the dying incumbent had to tell him, was always touched by his earnestness and simplicity. When he became too weak to read the Bible himself, which at last

was the case, it was a strange sight to see the churchman on his sick-bed and the dissenter at his side reading to him from the pages of the Book. In that Book there was enough to draw them close together, without splitting on the rock of a few hard texts; the churchman had been ever a liberal, and the heart of the dissenter was unfolding and becoming better able to appreciate the thoughts which were busy at the brain of the sick man. Had Mr. Chark been well and strong, and able to argue at greater length, he would have stood less chance of ultimate success; but Bayford was tender towards him, listened always with a strange patience, and, when he could not agree with him, held his tongue. It was the course adopted by Mr. Alland during his vigils—so it was a term of probation for both these young preachers, and taught them both patience, a deference to the opinions of others, and a knowledge of the sterling gold in every creed under the sun, if that creed teach the love of God and faith in the gospel proclaimed unto all men.

Whilst the good seed sown by the careful

hand of the incumbent was likely to take root—as he had believed for some years that it would, were the opportunity ever presented to sow it—Mr. Chark left not forgotten the fair girl who had been his companion from sixteen years of age.

She was to be left alone in the world after he had gone ; if she would only promise to accept Mr. Alland's hand before the time of parting came, he felt that he should die more trustful of her future. He spoke of this to Alland one day, and the rector very straightforwardly, very simply, laid bare his heart to him.

"I have been thinking of this, my dear friend," he said ; "but have objected to mention it lately—objected still more to pain Amy by alluding to a topic so foreign to the thoughts which naturally disturb her at this time. I need not again say to you, that to see her my wife will be the proudest moment of my life, that to hear her promise to be that wife some day will make me a very different man."

"I think you have only to ask."

“Do you give me your permission again, sir?”

“With all my heart.”

The Reverend Frederick Alland went wooing under these strange circumstances, and returned after a while with a very grave face, to communicate the result to Mr. Chark.

“She will give me no decisive answer yet awhile—she is naturally very much distressed at the mention of love and marriage now. She pleads for a postponement of my suit, with a strange earnestness that I cannot refuse.”

After Mr. Alland had taken his departure, the guardian and ward conferred upon this important matter—Mr. Chark intimating, not for the first time, that Amy's indecision rendered him unhappy.

“If I could be sure that you and Alland were likely to be man and wife, when I am gone—” he pleaded; “if there were no uncertainty concerning you to shadow my last days!”

“I will do my best to—to think of this, dear sir.”

“At once?”

“At once—if you wish it.”

“It is the one of the wishes nearest my heart.”

“I—I will think of it again.”

“And to-morrow, or the next day, will you let me know your decision?”

“Yes,” faltered Amy.

The decision was not arrived at on the morrow, and Mr. Chark cast many a wistful look towards her in vain. On the following day, after Mr. Bayford had paid a long visit to Mr. Chark, and when he was on the eve of departure, Amy Saville, in a very agitated manner, desired his attendance in the drawing-room.

“I wished to see you,” she said, when they were seated—“to ask your advice, sir.”

“My advice, Miss Saville?” said the dissenter, somewhat surprised.

“On a matter that concerns my future happiness in this world—on a matter where I know not to turn for honest and unselfish counsel.”

She wrung her hands as she spoke, and

looked almost piteously at the dissenter ; it was very strange that she should seek him for a confidant.

“ I have no mother, brother, or sister, on whose honest breast to lay my head, and tell the story of my folly,” she said, impetuously—“ the folly brought on me and others by my girl’s caprice and heartlessness. Will you, sir, hear me patiently ?”

“ Certainly, Miss Saville, but——”

“ I have to give my guardian an answer to a wish expressed by him—to tell him whether I will accept Mr. Alland for a husband, the next time he honours me by the offer of his hand. He dreads my future position isolated here—he reads the wishes of his friend—he reads everything but my own trouble and despair!”

She covered her face with her hands a moment, and rocked herself slowly to and fro. The dissenter had not recovered his composure at her eccentricity, when she was looking steadfastly towards him again, with the traces of some angry tears upon her cheek.

“ I have chosen you as my confidant, sir,

because you are an honest, deep-thinking man,—more, because you are the brother of Robert Bayford, and might have been my own brother, had I searched my heart more closely in that time which has vanished for ever.”

Bayford sat with his hands clasped together on the table, looking very intently at the troubled girl. His heart was already touched by her excitement and perplexity.

“ You know the story, sir, of your brother’s first engagement to me,” she continued—“ of the long time that ensued between our parting in India and his return to Chipnam—of his return and all that followed it? He left me a girl—he returned to find me a woman. On the first day he startled me with the intensity of his affection—he bewildered me—he led me to doubt whether I were deserving of him or could make him happy—whether I really loved him! It was a cruel doubt in the early days of his return, but I could not shake it off—he did not appear to me the same Robert Bayford who had been my big playfellow, my father’s friend. I was perplexed, unable to

define the feelings in my own heart, terrified when he came near me, more terrified to find myself alone with him. His affection was so intense that I felt I was unworthy of it—he seemed to expect so much love in return, and to evince so much disappointment when I was timid or shrank away from him. He would not give me time—he would not let me think—I felt in a vortex, wherein no sober thoughts could come to me and tell me the true state of my heart. The great fear that after marriage he would be unhappy and disappointed with me, chilled me. When he was stern one day with me, and set an interdict on my attending St. Martin's, I dreaded the future still more, dreaded his after-unhappiness more than my own—*his* unhappiness, sir!"

She wrung her hands again—Mr. Bayford had started at her last words. For the first time in his life, he was beginning to understand the girl who should have been his brother's wife.

"I knew I loved him in my own way, but I feared it was not a love worthy of him, or that he would appreciate. I thought I did

not love him well enough; in my excitement, bewilderment, folly, I let him go away from me to ruin—discovering at the last, when it was too late, and I had helped to accelerate his downfall, that I loved him with all my heart and soul and strength. Oh! sir, forgive me—in wronging him, I wronged you too!”

“My poor child, you have no forgiveness to demand of me,” said Mr. Bayford; “the story is a sad one, which, with common patience, common trust in God, might have turned once more its brightest, best side to us all. There are some men to whom a little disappointment is an excuse for crime. Robert is one of these, and it is God’s will that he should never be your husband. You must believe that it is all ordered for the best; that he was as unworthy then, as he is now, of that priceless gift—a good woman’s love.”

“Have *you* not forgiven him?” she asked with some curiosity.

“I have forgiven him—I pray God has,” answered the dissenter; “my love is only the more strong and deep, knowing that he is in

danger, and in the midst of a world of temptation, without a true friend at his side. Yours is a different feeling to that; it should be, if you have a woman's respect for yourself; a feeling very distinct and apart from anything entertained towards him in the days before his fall. I trust I do not pain you."

"No, sir, not much," with a faint smile that went to the minister's heart.

"I cannot swerve from my love for him, for I may win him back. We were children of one mother—he was the favourite son, Miss Saville—and when he went to India, she pined for him as for one dead. She believed that they would never meet again—they never did. She prayed me not to forget him or turn away from him, as though there had been a foreknowledge of this great trouble shadowed to her on her dying bed. I cannot love him less, but *your* duty is to expunge him from your memory. There is no hope of his return to you—there is no amendment that could make him worthy of you."

Amy did not answer—she wrung her hands together piteously, as though his words were

painful to her. She bent her head more and more towards her heaving bosom.

"To think of him now would be to nourish a morbid romance, that would end in unhappiness—perhaps misery. Such an illusion I hope you are expelling—that you have expelled. Setting aside all the thoughts which those who believe in romance would think suitable to the occasion, shall I tell you what I think the wisest, best step you can take in search of happiness?"

"If you will, sir."

"Marry Mr. Alland."

"You advise that—after all that I have told you! You advise me to deceive that honest gentleman."

"Not to deceive him, Miss Saville—God forbid that! To tell him simply and truthfully as much of this story as you may think necessary—certainly sufficient to let him understand that you *did* love Robert Bayford when the engagement was broken off. If he love you, he will not flinch from the confession; and if you accept him, I am sufficient judge of human nature to prophesy that you

will be a very happy wife. Such a man as Mr. Alland will not look for any passionate demonstration of attachment—will not, I believe, exhibit any on his own side. But he will love you none the less for it—and the time will come when you will love him all the more.”

He had risen to leave her, and she had not betrayed, by a glance, a wish to prolong the interview. At the door the thought struck him that he could say a little more in the cause of this Mr. Alland for whom he found himself speaking so earnestly. He feared she was the slave of an illusion—that to build on one false hope would be the shipwreck of her life.

“By accepting Mr. Alland you promote your own happiness and his—by refusing him, you shadow both.”

With this last assertion he went away. He thought his advice was good—that being pressed to give it, he could have said nothing better, suggested nothing more fitting for this young girl, soon to be cast adrift on the waters surging round her quiet home. She was an orphan; Mr. Chark had no money to leave; an honourable, even a wealthy man,

loved her and sought her for his wife—what better advice, for one situated like Amy Saville, could have been given her?

Still, to every rule in life there is an exception—the advice that would serve for nine hundred and ninety-nine, may be worse than unprofitable to the thousandth. In this instance, it might have been better, wiser, to have said, “Wait a while.” To have said to the guardian also, “Wait a while, old man, and trouble not thyself with the loves of the living. Turn to thy God, and trust in Him to watch over the fatherless, rather than bend the fatherless to a course from which the heart yearns to swerve. Earth and earth’s thoughts therein to the maiden—heaven and heaven’s reward for thee!”

CHAPTER VI.

WITH THE STREAM.

“GUARDIAN, dear, I have thought of all this. I have sought the advice of others better able to say what is best than myself—I will marry Mr. Alland when he asks me to be his wife.”

“Good girl—you take a weight from my heart.”

That was all that ensued between Amy Saville and him she called her guardian still—he saw that she was troubled, and did not dwell upon the topic ever again. He felt that she had not decided hastily; that she had weighed every hope for and against the match, and had answered from the heart. He did

not know so much of the secrets of that heart as Robert Bayford's brother—Amy would not distress him at the last with a repetition of yesterday's confession.

So it was all arranged, and one more link that had kept his thoughts to the earth was let go from the spirit that soared to be free. Before he gave over *all* thoughts upon the subject, however, he spoke to Alland concerning Amy; he must not leave a fragment of doubt behind him, which, floating here and there, might interfere at last with the complex machinery of human life, and bring human aspirations to a stand-still.

"Mr. Alland," he said, "before I dismiss the one topic that has troubled you and me so long, let me repeat a former question. You stake your future happiness on Amy Saville?"

"Yes."

"Knowing you so well, I cannot think that you are likely to change," he said; "that months hence, years hence, thoughts of a different nature on which she may have no claim, are likely to set you on a different path. Follow

this one to the end, and in the sunshine beyond the shadows that are on us now, you will find Amy waiting for you."

"My dear sir—my dear old friend!"

"Do not think me officious to the last in having pressed this question home—in having to a certain extent taken it out of your hands, and left you at a future time only to ask and have," he said. "I am a feeble old man, who wishes to die content!"

"You have been my best friend."

"Let that best friend say a little more on another subject, Alland. You will at least believe he means well."

The incumbent had adroitly shifted his position to the old battle-ground, but Mr. Alland did not take up arms against him. He sat by the old friend's side, prepared to listen to the one ever-recurring theme of "Peace on earth, and good will amongst men."

"You and I are members of the same church, have signed the same articles of religion, have been supposed to make the same exact study, and form the same interpretations of the

Holy Scriptures. I fear our minds have diverged somewhat, Alland."

"It is natural."

"Yours is a far-reaching mind, let me say—one that in its eagerness to grasp at every small truth in God's book, occasionally lets slip the grand and simple ones, which were meant for all men's guidance."

"What do you mean by small truths?"

"The right interpretation of certain texts—the right translation of certain words—the hard study to make sure whether something has a literal or a figurative meaning, which, discovered, tends not to man's salvation—and concerning which there will be always opposed to you men as clever and technical as yourself. Am I hard upon you, Alland?"

"No, sir. From you I can bear a lecture. You are my senior—I am young—I may have erred."

"That is a great deal for Frederick Alland to confess," said the incumbent, with a quiet smile; "but do not mistake me. I do not counsel you to slacken your energy, only to turn that energy in another direction."

Alland listened still very intently. In all his life he had not remembered sitting quietly to hear a sermon in his turn. Mr. Chark had in the days of his better health spoken once or twice on the subject, but never with that same strange earnestness which, coming from the lips of one so weak, sounded like inspiration—like a warning, not to be lightly disregarded when the old friend's grave was green.

“Turn that energy, Alland, to the one great effort to save sinners,” he continued—“the form and manner of saving does not matter. Bayford may be as faithful a servant of his Master as yourself. Lying here, I can believe he is—I know he is! Do not, Alland, in the days of your riper genius—in the days of your full power and mental strength, misdirect that energy. Think a little more, when you would add one more form—one more *attraction* to our mother church. Do not consider the church singing, the church *trappings*, the church ceremonies, so paramount, that when they startle and pain a congregation of simple worshippers, they cannot be given up.

Better to resign them all, and turn back to the simple worship of our Puritan forefathers, than send one away in anger at the pomp or the egotism with which you call heaven to witness what a miserable sinner you are. There, Alland, I will not worry you any more."

It was not all that he wished to say, but it was all that he felt Alland would bear just then. He saw that even with Alland his words had had some weight; there was nothing new in his preaching, but it had been preached in a different manner, and once or twice he had seen the listener wince. Besides, he preached from the heart; and that is the finest pulpit from which to deliver a sermon on the vanities of the world, or the church.

When Bayford called the same evening, Mr. Chark had mustered strength to reason with him again. Before he addressed those two young men together, he wanted still more to impress them with the little difference there was in their preaching and practice, after all.

We need not give in detail the remarks

which Mr. Chark thought appropriate to the condition of James Bayford. Our critics are already inclined to regard us as an insidious deceiver, sliding in, under cover of a novel to amuse, odd sermons of our own and odd opinions of our own on matters theological. Is there any occasion to deny the charge, or to defend the principle which, even in the pages of a novel, endeavours to arouse a little sober thought? If we do not sacrifice the story's interest to the crotchets we insinuate therein, possibly both critics and readers will think well of us. Surely we are certain of good words—if the story please, those who differ from our opinions will forgive us—and if the story be not liked, those who are of our way of thinking will at least consider the moral conveyed not a bad one. So we please everybody, and pass over that fable which appertains to old-fashioned times, and with which we have not the slightest connection.

Still, the story being the first consideration, we do not append in full Mr. Chark's remarks to James Bayford—the reader can guess what

they were, knowing a little of Mr. Chark's character. Suffice it to say, that he begged from the dissenter a little more consideration for the church—a little more mercy for the stanch convictions of men as energetic and *religious* as himself. Not in the stern pride which disdains all form—and is none the less pride—to despise the set prayers and set forms of the church from which he held himself aloof; to remember that the churchman gave the same glad tidings to his listeners, taught the same holy precepts, fought side by side with him the same battle against evil; that that was the one thing needful—the manner of giving, and teaching and fighting being of lesser consideration.

And James Bayford listened as patiently as Frederick Alland had done; was struck, like him, with the fire that still lingered in the frame of him sick unto death. In his pulpit Chark had preached with less energy, and impressed not a scanty congregation of shopkeepers and villagers—on his death-bed the power was given him to touch the hearts of

two men with more energy and genius than he had ever possessed.

He lingered many days yet, and Bayford and Alland had still many more interviews with him, meeting occasionally by the side of him who wished well to them both. When they were together near him, he watched them very wistfully, but spoke not of religion before them. He was still biding his time to make them still better friends and co-operators—he seemed to have no fear that time would slip through his hands, and leave him beyond them in eternity. He had a consciousness that the opportunity would not escape him, and he was right.

Meanwhile, whilst these vigils still continued, whilst once a day at least the dissenter and the churchman went up the steep hill to the villa, the course of events in the outer world went on. Signs even in Chipnam of how Robert Bayford was progressing, showed themselves at Saville House—that thermometer by which an anxious man and woman could guess how the world was going with

their brother. James Bayford or Susan had never left off calling at that house to make inquiries, were never turned from the prosecution of those inquiries by the abruptness and insolence of the menials lingering there upon board wages. They felt that a step lower in the brother's fortunes had been made, when the insolence of the servants increased ; when they became uncivil, it was easy to imagine that the London agent, or the steward, had left off paying them their salaries. They confessed as much in a surly manner to the minister one day, and he paid them to the end of the week, and advised them to be gone.

He was premature and lost by it, for their wages came in full the week following, and a summons of dismissal also, which scattered these harpers and flunkies to the four corners of the earth. James Bayford saw the man who had grumbled the loudest, and been paid twice for his services, on the footboard of a carriage in the London streets six months afterwards, and the grateful being turned up his nose disparagingly at one who had striven to keep his brother's credit good. Human

nature all the world over—the dissenter's feelings were not hurt much.

The thermometer fell lower, and passed the temperate stage. The house was left in charge of the gardener and his wife, the shutters in the great, grand rooms remained closed all the day long. Finally, there broke forth on the walls, bills proclaiming the sale of all the furniture and effects on the premises—there started forth in the newspapers the announcement of the sale of the house at Garraway's.

James Bayford attended that sale of furniture, mixed with the Chipnam and Chingley brokers; with the hook-nosed birds of prey who had come from London for "great pargains," who wanted to pid on commission for the minister, and swore they'd run up every article to double its value if the shentleman dreamed of pidding on his own account. James Bayford did not bid, however, or commission a broker to bid for him. He had taken his place at the back of the drawing-room—where he and Robert had struggled for the mastery, and Robert, alas, had been the

victor—and watched gloomily the progress of the sale. He knew but little of the contents of the house, and thought something might present itself which Robert might have prized once, or which he himself might identify as belonging to the past days when they were boys together. But all was new and fashionable and garish—there was nothing which Robert would value, or thank him for buying for him. The jests of the brokers and commission agents did not affect the minister—there were no home associations connected with furniture, paintings, or “old arm-chairs.” The second day’s sale was of china, glass, and plate, winding up with the “cellar of choice wines”; James Bayford did not attend it—could not have attended it, if he had wished,—for at mid-day Mr. Chark’s servant arrived post-haste at the cottage with the message that her master was worse and wished very much to see him again.

James Bayford started at once towards the villa—met on his way thither Mr. Alland, proceeding in the same direction.

“You have been sent for?” said the latter.

"Yes."

"We are nearing the end, then," said Alland.

Almost unconsciously he passed his arm through that of the dissenter, and in this friendly contiguity the two young men went up the steep hill together. Was it an augury of the better days ahead of them, when they should toil together up the steeper moral road, encouraging the faint-hearted by the way!

CHAPTER VII.

CHURCH AND CHAPEL SHAKE HANDS.

AT the door of the villa, Amy Saville and a white-haired old gentleman were standing, as though awaiting their arrival. The old gentleman, the head physician of the county, and well-known to every one within twenty miles of Chipnam, stared a little at the relative positions of dissenter and churchman. He was a stanch churchman himself, and had sat under Mr. Alland ever since he had been rector of St. Martin's.

"How is the patient?" said Alland.

"Sinking slowly—but surely," replied the physician; "he appears very anxious to see

you both. I have been persuading him in vain to forego the interview."

"Will it disturb him much?" asked Bayford.

"I can't say. He does not fear being disturbed. Should he become over-excited, perhaps you will send for me? I have promised Miss Saville to wait here till —— the last."

"The last!" said Alland, as Amy burst into tears and hurried away from them; "not so soon and so sudden as that, sir!"

"It has been a long illness, Mr. Alland," was the reply; "I do not think that we can call the end speedy."

"Right, sir. Shall we go up together?" he added, turning to James Bayford.

"If you please."

Softly and cautiously upstairs into the darkened room, and taking their places by the bed of the dying clergyman. He turned his face towards them with a faint smile as they entered, and reached out a hand to each.

"They told me there would come a very sudden change," he said, feebly; "but I would not believe them. I was so certain

of the chance of a long talk with you both again. Is Amy here?"

"Here," she murmured; "do you want me, dear?"

She rose from her knees at the bed's foot and went towards him.

"God bless you!—no; not yet awhile. Don't leave me, though."

Amy returned to her place—to her prostrate, silent position, with her face buried in the bed-clothes. Mr. Chark beckoned the two preachers to approach more near.

"Had time been given me of greater length," he said, "I might have only wearied you more. It is a very short sermon with which I am going to trouble you now."

"Its purport, my dear old friend, I think we both can guess—we both can spare you."

"Let me speak," he said, more warmly, "I wish you to hear me—if you will, to bear with me. Lying here so long, I have had much time given me to ponder on the great question—the great, glorious subject which we three have studied."

He motioned for Bayford to draw up the window-blind—his sight was dim, and he wished to watch both faces that were turned towards him.

“At different times and seasons of this illness, I have spoken to each of you, as an old man might speak to his children growing up to man’s estate. I have acknowledged your talents, but I have seen your faults—that over-zeal which goes beyond the mark and spends itself in air. Let me remind you over again—for the last time, so bear with me—that you are both working to one end, that the sect of either is of little consequence, and that the result of your efforts is what God will look to. Working, then, to one end—give me your promise to work *together* for good!”

The voice seemed to grow more strong and forcible instead of getting weaker. The wan face even became flushed with the life-blood that was there yet. Bayford and Alland hesitated—it was a promise that implied too much—that each considered was beyond fulfilment.

The incumbent marked their hesitation—read their thoughts.

“ You misunderstand me,” he said ; “ I do not ask a promise to work together in the way you think—to sink those opinions or differences which are natural, and must remain with you. For the good of those I still can call my fellow-men I ask you not to think of *sect* too highly, not to forget too often the claims which all sects, all religions, have upon an honest and God-fearing man. Work together, Alland, in the hope of aiding in one common good—be friends together, assisting each other when the case is difficult, and the sinner hard to be reclaimed. At my own bedside there stood, in the beginning of my illness, two physicians to deliberate on my case ; two men whose medical views were very contrary, but who could meet together here, compare notes, and make a common case between them. When the moral case is difficult, and the moral sufferer hard to cure, such meetings between yourselves will be likely to do good. There is no telling where the good may end, when all truly religious men are

banded together in one cause. If that time ever comes on earth, there will be rejoicing in heaven."

He caught Alland's hand in his again, as though he were appealing to the man more difficult to soften—his brother churchman let it remain there in his own.

"When the Samaritan by the wayside is a dissenter, a methodist, a Unitarian, or anything, don't turn away, or lose your interest. When the sick unto death is a churchgoer, high or low, Bayford, do not bid him seek his own shepherd, if the right word to touch his heart be ready to your lips. Work together, and despise no man for a difference of opinion—work together, ye two, and see what the end will be in the bright days which I pray are in store for all God's preachers. Work together against the enemies of God's word—the scoffers at His commandments—the breakers of His precepts. You will have more love for each other, more respect for each other's teaching, when the result of your efforts shows itself in the better condition of those whose salvation you at-

tempt. Church and Chapel hand-in-hand to the one task of reformation ; not at arm's length in the one outburst at each other's mode of teaching it. Shake hands, you two men, for your own sakes as well as mine."

He pushed Alland's hand towards Bayford's ; in the sight of the dying clergyman, the two preachers grasped each other's hands—a pledge of their future intentions to work upwards together.

" Apart, nursing your own religious views and proclaiming them, you have seen what your own little town has become ; try the experiment of a broader Christianity and deeper love, praying and preaching as you will, and after your own fashions. I fear there are Bishops yet who would despise such teaching as mine ; as there are elders of your chapels who would scout the man who thus gives voice to it. But ever remember it is a teaching not to be despised ; it is the best, the surest way to win men's hearts to a merciful Redeemer. With life on earth going further and further back from me, I feel that what I

have said will not make that life any the more narrow, sordid, or vain-glorious."

To the last his voice had rung out like a trumpet-sound, as it had never echoed before within the walls of St. Edward's. No faintness, no battling with breath, no struggling with the angel of death to leave him yet a little while on the boundary separating time from eternity.

What that the weakness of death, the startling reaction, came after the good he had attempted? He did not repine; and those who watched him with quivering lips need not have mourned for him.

Amy was sobbing by his side, one hand of his in hers, the other resting on her head; the physician was watching; the two ministers were bending anxiously over him.

"Oh! gardy dear, you will say good-bye to me—the Amy you have loved so long, whom you leave behind so desolate!"

"Not—not desolate!" he whispered.

The thought seemed to remind him of Alland, for he opened his eyes and looked towards him.

"You will remember—you will protect?"

"I will."

"For her happiness, Alland, you will live?"

"I promise that."

"Where is Bayford?"

"Here."

"Good-bye. Good-bye, Amy, and don't cry. The way seems very bright before me—the world is not so hard to quit as I believed—it would be—'*The peace of God—be—with—you—all!*' "

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.





